

# **INTERROGATIVES IN BIBLICAL HEBREW**

*A CASE STUDY IN THE JOSEPH NARRATIVE*

BY

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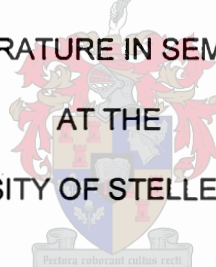
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PROMOTER: C H J VAN DER MERWE

## DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted to any university for a degree.

Màuro F Meister

Stellenbosch, 15th September 1996.

## ABSTRACT

### *INTERROGATIVES IN BIBLICAL HEBREW A CASE STUDY IN THE JOSEPH NARRATIVE*

In the light of the present literature on the subject of interrogatives in Biblical Hebrew a new study is necessary. Assessing some of the traditional grammatical approaches to the subject one notices that their presentation is sometimes confusing. The major problem with these presentations is that they do not make a proper distinction between the form (interrogative) and the most usual functions of this type of sentence (question). Thus, although most grammars enable the student to identify an interrogative sentence through surface level criteria, they do not enable the student to identify its many functions (usually functions are only listed without any explicit criteria). Observing the description of interrogatives in other languages one notes that the descriptions are much more clear when form and function are properly identified.

In this study we propose to investigate interrogative sentences in their context using a framework that will allow one to identify their functions. Our initial hypothesis is that speech act theory combined with an approach that allows the analysis of text, beyond the boundaries of sentences, can be fruitful. For this purpose we follow the approach of Schiffrin, *Approaches to Discourse* (1994). Schiffrin combines speech act theory with principles of discourse analysis (analysis of text), allowing other factors (textual and social contexts) to be included in the investigation.

In order to verify our hypothesis we apply the framework above to the interrogatives in the Joseph Narrative (Genesis 37-50). We chose this narrative as sample for the simple fact that it is rich in interrogative sentences and allows one to deal with context more easily. We do not propose to interpret the narrative itself but we only use it to test the initial hypothesis.

The findings of the investigation are presented in a final section, where some suggestions are made regarding two aspects: how to approach interrogative sentences in the First Testament and how the subject of interrogatives in Biblical Hebrew should be presented to newcomers. The first suggestion incorporate a series of 'rules-of-thumb' as to how to find out the functions of interrogatives.

## OPSOMMING

### **INTERROGATIEWE IN BYBELSE HEBREEUS. 'N GEVALLESTUDIE AAN DIE HAND VAN DIE JOSEFVERHAAL**

Geoordeel aan bestaande publikasies op die terrein van interrogatiewe (vraagvorme) in Bybelse Hebreeus is 'n ondersoek na dié verskynsel onvermydelik. Veral sommige werke in terme van die tradisioneel grammatika benadering neig om verwarrend te wees. Die kern van die probleem setel in die feit dat daar nie 'n duidelike onderskeid gemaak word tussen die vorm (interrogatief) en die mees gebruiklike funksies van die vorm(e) nie. Gevolglik, alhoewel die meeste grammatikas die identifikasie van die interrogatiewe sinne op grond van oppervlakstruktuurkenmerke moontlik maak, is hulle nie van veel nut as dit by die identifikasie van die funksies van die konstruksies kom nie (hulle lys normaalweg slegs die funksies sonder om enige kriteria aan te bied op grond waarvan die verskillende funksies geïdentifiseer kan word). Wanneer 'n mens na die beskrywing van interrogatiewe in ander tale kyk, blyk die voordele van 'n konsekwente onderskeid tussen die vorm en funksie duidelik.

In hierdie studie wil ons in die beskrywing van interrogatiewe van 'n taalkundige raamwerk gebruik wat die identifisering van die funksies van dié konstruksies aan die hand van eksplisiet kriteria moontlik maak. Ons hipotese is dat die taalhandelingssteorie in kombinasie met 'n benadering wat die analise van tekste anderkant die grense van sinne moontlik maak, met sukses vir dié doel ingespan kan word. Vir die doel volg ons veral die benadering van Debora Schiffrin, soos geformuleer in haar boek *Approaches to Discourse* (1994). Sy kombineer die taalhandelingssteorie met beginsels van diskoersanalise (analise van tekste), en laat dan ook nog toe dat ander faktore (tekstuele en sosiale konteks) in 'n ondersoek meespeel.

Ten einde ons hipotese te toets, beskryf ons die interrogatiewe in die Josefverhaal in terme van bg. raamwerk. Ons het besluit om hierdie verhaal as monster te gebruik omrede dit soveel interrogatiewe bevat. Soveel gegewens binne die bestek van een verhaal maak dit moontlik om ook die konteks van die verhaal deeglik te verreken. Uit die aard van die saak gaan ons nie probeer om die verhaal self te interpreteer nie. Dit bied slegs die data aan die hand waarvan ons hipotese getoets kan word.

Die bevindings van ons ondersoek word in die finale afdeling van die werk aangebied. Daar word die volgende gesuggereer: (1) hoe interrogatiewe in die Eerste (Ou) Testament benader kan word en (2) hoe dié tipe konstruksies in BH aan mense wat die taal aanleer, aangebied kan word. Die eerste suggestie sluit 'n aantal praktiese wenke in oor hoe die funksie van 'n interrogatief bepaal kan word.

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I dedicate this work to my wife, Denise, and my two children, Avner and Nina. They are my support for all things.

The ultimate purpose of this work is the glory of the God of the Bible and His Son. In my imperfect ways I want to give all glory unto Them.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

### ***BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ABBREVIATIONS***

BDB	Brown, F, Driver S & Briggs, C 1907. <i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> . Oxford: Clarendon Press.
GKC	Gesenius, W, Kautzsch, E & Cowley A 1910. <i>Gesenius Hebrew Grammar</i> . Oxford: Clarendon Press.
WO	Waltke, B & O'Connor, M 1990. <i>An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax</i> . Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns.
LXX	Septuagint
BHS	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i>
RSV	Revised Standard Version
ASV	Authorized Standard Version

### ***OTHER ABBREVIATIONS***

JN	Joseph Narrative
H	Hearer
S	Speaker

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## INTRODUCTION

According to Lyons only three universal functional categories can be found in language: statements, questions and commands. Other scholars include a fourth category, viz. exclamations. That most - if not all - languages make use of questions, however, is widely accepted.<sup>1</sup> Interrogative sentences in Biblical Hebrew (the most common way to pose questions) are the subject of this dissertation.

Although the subtitle of the dissertation refers to the Joseph Narrative, I do not propose to interpret the narrative or extract any lesson(s) based on its interrogatives (for this approach see Hyman 1984:437-455). Only those bits and pieces necessary to the interpretation of the interrogatives in the Joseph narrative are dealt with. It does not mean that the conclusions we come to are not helpful in interpreting the narrative, but our goal is to strive for a better understanding of interrogatives in Biblical Hebrew itself.

However, working with a small corpus limits our conclusions about interrogatives in Biblical Hebrew to solutions that are of a general nature. We thus acknowledge the 'incompleteness' of our investigation. The solutions presented here must still be scrutinised in the light of Biblical Hebrew interrogative sentences outside our corpus. By implication, this means that the solutions we provide are not necessarily and immediately applicable to each and every interrogative in Biblical Hebrew; however, they provide a framework which the reader of Biblical Hebrew can use to identify interrogatives and understand interrogatives throughout the First Testament.

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<sup>1</sup>See Joseph Greenberg (1966) "Some Universals of Grammar". His study in this particular article has samples of 30 different languages, including Hebrew and modern Greek.

The main reason why we chose the Joseph narrative as a case study is because it proved to be rich in examples of many kinds of interrogatives identified through surface-level criteria. These interrogative sentences are a good sample of what one can find throughout the First Testament. We avoided the idea of a study including the whole First Testament as the corpus. Interrogative sentences in the First Testament number in the thousands and could be easily retrieved with the help of the different kinds of Bible analysis software. However, to deal with each reference, considering the text and the context of each, would not be practical. Thus, although 'incomplete' in the sense that it does not cover each and every interrogative sentence in Biblical Hebrew, our investigation is not 'inadequate' because it provides the reader with a working framework to continue the investigation of the subject.<sup>2</sup>

The problem that prompted our investigation of interrogatives in Biblical Hebrew is that while examining some traditional grammars on the subject, we found that the explanations offered often are vague or confusing. In contrast, examining the description of interrogatives in some other languages (e.g. English) one observes that the distinctions made by modern grammars between form and function make it easier to understand interrogatives in those languages (e.g. Quirk *et al.* 1985). This distinction between form and function is lacking in most of the traditional grammars of Biblical Hebrew. In most cases one finds that their descriptions try to assign functional categories to the syntactic structure of the interrogative sentences without presenting any explicit criteria according to which one should associate functional categories with interrogative sentences.

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<sup>2</sup> See Miller's (1992:13-17) discussion on the subject of the description of ancient languages within a limited corpus. She proposes, following Lyons (1971:138), that "the corpus of linguistic examples should be large enough to allow for adequate description, in the absence of native speakers" (1992:15).

Although most traditional grammars provide us with some criteria to identify interrogative sentences in Biblical Hebrew,<sup>3</sup> they do not provide criteria as to how one can identify the many functions of these sentences. One can illustrate the problem with the description of interrogatives marked by the question word *מה*. According to some traditional grammars these interrogatives are used to pose real questions, mostly seeking identification of persons, sometimes used to pose exclamatory questions, and sometimes rhetorical questions. Firstly, the terminology is not clear because 'exclamatory questions' and 'rhetorical questions' are not defined. What do these terms mean? Can these terms be associated with specific functions? (e.g. criticism, rebuke, etc.) Secondly, only a few random examples from the First Testament text are given, but without any criteria as to how can one assign the function of the interrogative in its context. It is obvious that these grammars recognise the multi-functionality of sentences (one form many functions) but there is no explanation of the relationship between them. (The descriptions of interrogatives in general and in Biblical Hebrew, appear in Chapter 1, 'What do we Know About Questions?')

Thus, most of the grammars following a traditional approach to interrogatives leave the reader with a question to be answered: how can one identify the different functions of interrogative sentences? We propose to answer this question by investigating interrogative sentences in their context, using a framework that would allow one to identify their function. Our initial hypothesis is that speech act theory can provide this framework, specially if combined with an approach that allows the analysis of the text beyond the boundaries of sentences.

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<sup>3</sup> In some cases we disagree with the assumptions of the traditional grammars regarding the criteria for recognising interrogative sentences.

The basic proposition of speech act theory is that one can do things with words, viz. speech acts (Austin 1962:6).<sup>4</sup> It is possible to do things with words because people intentionally use rules in their communication. Thus, “speaking a language is engaging in a rule-governed form of behaviour” (Searle 1969:22). These rules (which are intuitive to the native speaker of a language) are the actual criteria by which speaker and hearer identify each other’s speech acts. Once identified, these rules provide the linguist with a taxonomy to identify speech acts. The original works of Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) deal mostly with hypothetical and isolated sentences (case approach). As pointed out above (see footnote 4) this approach is problematic and in some cases its foundations can be proved wrong. We do not, however, limit the application of the theory to isolated sentences in the text, but we do analyse the “sequential relationships between sentences themselves” (Schiffrin 1994:61) in an approach similar to Schiffrin’s (1994). Her approach, is not limited to the application of the theories of Austin and Searle to sentences. She combines speech act theory with principles of discourse analysis (analysis of text), allowing other factors (co-text and context) to be included in the investigation. This combination provides the necessary framework to analyse the functions of interrogatives in Biblical Hebrew. Schiffrin’s analysis of questions in English proves to be very helpful and insightful. (The description of speech act theory and its developments appears in Chapter 2, ‘Speech Act as an Approach to Discourse.’)

Thus, what we propose is to apply speech act theory to interrogative sentences in their context and investigate their relations. This allows one to overcome the problems of a ‘case approach’ in speech act theory. One should note that we use speech act theory as an instrument to investigate a particular phenomenon in Biblical

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<sup>4</sup> Mey (1993:170) points out that the empirical basis on which this presupposition is founded does not always hold up to close scrutiny. This is due to the ‘case approach’ followed by Austin and Searle, which, in one sense, is overcome in the approach used by Schiffrin (1994) as explained below.

Hebrew, viz. interrogative sentences. In Chapter 3, 'Sample Analysis', we apply the principles of speech act theory to the sentences in the Joseph Narrative that are identified as interrogatives by surface level criteria. In some cases we approach sentences that, although not marked as interrogatives by surface level criteria, are pointed out as interrogatives by grammars or translations. We start with a syntactic construction to analyse their functions and relations in the immediate context.

We may sum up the goal of this dissertation as providing the means by which the reader of the First Testament can better understand interrogatives and their functions in Biblical Hebrew. We deal with the following set of questions: How can one recognise an interrogative in BH? How can one recognise what function an interrogative has in BH? Which framework might help one to better understand interrogatives in Biblical Hebrew?

As a result of our work (Chapter 4 - 'Conclusions') we present the findings from the sample analysis in a more systematised form. We re-state the problem and explain the constituents of the frame of reference that were used in our analysis so that the reader can also use them in his/her own investigations of interrogatives.

We also present two appendixes. Appendix A is a section explaining how one can approach interrogatives in Biblical Hebrew (a 'how-to' section). In Appendix B we suggest how the subject should be presented in text books in order to avoid the confusion that is present in some grammars that adopt a traditional approach.

One should note that, unless otherwise stated, all translations of biblical texts are from the English Revised Standard Version. The Hebrew text is from BHS, using the database from BibleWindows 4.0 (Silver Mountain Software, 1995).



## CHAPTER 1

### WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT QUESTIONS?

#### **METHOD**

The intention of this chapter is to broaden our knowledge of interrogatives and questions.<sup>5</sup> It is, however, important to limit these horizons considering the final objective of this work, viz. to understand interrogatives and their functions in Biblical Hebrew. The general theme “questions” prompted an enormous amount of research among the various linguistic schools and especially in the most recent approaches like socio-linguistics. To organise these research findings into a comprehensible framework is a task that goes beyond the scope of the present work. This initial chapter has no intention of being exhaustive. What we propose is a general framework to provide the parameters to guide our steps in the analysis of the material regarding questions and provide some consistent background information to analyse questions in Biblical Hebrew.

General linguistics is commonly divided into *descriptive*, *historical* and *comparative*<sup>6</sup> linguistics (Robins 1980). The names are more or less self-explanatory but it is worthwhile to give brief definitions of each, in view of the inconsistent terminology used by the various schools. Descriptive linguistics (not necessarily in contrast to prescriptive grammar from the traditional grammarians) describes and analyses the rules for and ways in which a language operates. This description may refer to dif-

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<sup>5</sup> Further in this chapter I provide a more refined distinction between the terms “interrogative” and “question”.

<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately this terminology is not consistent. Different schools and individual linguists use these terms in different ways, often without explanation of their meanings. For the sake of clarity we adopt

ferent periods in time (past or present) but should rather concentrate on one specific synchronic layer of a language (synchronic description).<sup>7</sup> Historical linguistics refers to the changes that occur in a certain language in distinct periods (diachronic description). Comparative linguistics, as the title suggests, deals with more than one language, comparing them from different points of view (identify similarities, historical relationships, etc.).

This chapter deals mainly with the description and comparison of languages, first in English and then in Biblical Hebrew. Regarding the descriptive section it is important to note that the periods of description for both languages (English and Biblical Hebrew) are different and also the description for each period comes from very different sources. Modern English descriptions are mostly from twentieth-century grammarians dealing with clear distinctions between synchronic and diachronic studies, phonology, morphology and syntax. The same does not apply for Biblical Hebrew in terms of the description of questions. With few exceptions, most of the Biblical Hebrew grammars<sup>8</sup> are dated from the last century and the beginning of this century and do not make clear the distinctions mentioned above. That is one reason why the description of Biblical Hebrew grammar is not completely satisfactory. Another reason is the difficulty of describing Biblical Hebrew grammar synchronically since the First Testament text was written over a period of many centuries and obviously many changes occurred in the language during that period (also a reason why this work deals with a small cluster of text). These differences of time and sources must be taken into consideration in the course of our study. We opted to use the subject “universals of language” to open our discussion to make the analysis of questions as

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here the terminology used by Robins (1980) which is similar to Crystal (1985) and Lyons (1968).

<sup>7</sup> See Deist (1995) for a discussion of the analysis of ancient literature with a synchronic perspective.

<sup>8</sup> The use of the expression grammar here refers to the so-called traditional grammars, but not, however, with a critical tone.



broad as possible at this initial stage. We use the same presupposition as Dawson (1994:17):

Modern descriptive linguistics, however, has discovered that, despite the great number of different languages in the world (over 5000 at latest count, not including languages of the antiquities), and despite the enormous diversity exhibited among these languages, there is a remarkable degree of consistency in language features; that is to say, the world's languages demonstrate a limited number of possible variants.

One should also note that the presentation of the material uses different levels of analysis and flows from descriptive syntax to pragmatic considerations. In the text we will use the term *interrogative* when talking about the syntax of sentences and reserve the term *question* for the occasions where we talk about the pragmatic meaning and relations of interrogatives. The reader will observe, however, that this distinction is not always clear, specially when quoting authors that do not practice such a distinction.

In the description of our method it is also important to distinguish between philosophical linguistics and philosophy of language in relation to the theme, interrogatives in Biblical Hebrew (see Searle, 1971:1). This allows the reader to understand the scope of the discussion and the limits of bibliographical data. The first one is a method by which philosophers attempt to solve philosophical problems through the analysis of words and its relations, but without a linguistic emphasis. An example of this approach is the article *Argumentation in the Light of a Theory of Questioning* (Meyer 1982), where questions are approached in a philosophical perspective. The second one attempts to analyse language and its features, viz. meaning, sense and reference, etc. It is in this sense that Austin, Searle and others

are called philosophers of language and it is from this perspective that we investigate interrogatives and questions in Biblical Hebrew.

## ***IN GENERAL - LANGUAGE UNIVERSALS***<sup>9</sup>

Are there language universals? The answer to this question is important if we intend to analyse questions from a comparative perspective and keep scientific integrity, understanding that the subject is very controversial. More specifically, is it possible to identify questions as a universal category?

The answers are bound to definitions and their implications. First, one needs to set the limits for the search of language universals. I suggest here that at least some basic generalisations as described by Hockett (1966:18ff.) must be clear to understand our discussion: (1) *Every human community has a language*; (2) *no species except our own has a language*;<sup>10</sup> (3) *every human communicative system usually called a (spoken)<sup>11</sup> language is a language in our sense*; (4) *every human language has the vocal-auditory channel*; (5) *every human language has a tradition*; (6) *every human language has learnability*.<sup>12</sup> These generalisations allow one to define the set of "languages" we are talking about. Animal languages (bee dancing) or signal languages (the use of drums, computer language, etc.) do not fit in the generalisations above. It is, however, interesting to note that the comparison between human and non-human systems of communication is the means that make it possible to state such generalisations (see Hockett 1966). Continuing the list above

<sup>9</sup> Although the generative school has generated a large amount of literature on the subject of interrogatives we do not refer to it here because it restricts itself to syntax.

<sup>10</sup> So far this generalisation cannot be disproved.

<sup>11</sup> It is important to remember that many languages do not have a written form.

<sup>12</sup> Hockett discusses appropriately and convincingly each of the generalisations quoted here and several others. He admits, however, in the reprint of the article, that he would change or withdraw several of the points discussed.



we have: (7) *every human language has both an intonational system and a nonintonational system; this dichotomy cuts across that into cenematics and plerematics;*<sup>13</sup> (8) *In every human language, plerematic patterning and cenematic patterning are both (independently) hierarchical.*

These last two generalisations assume that the kind of languages we are discussing here have a grammar (phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics). If that is true and we can apply it to English and Biblical Hebrew (although Biblical Hebrew is not a spoken language nowadays) we can then proceed to discuss grammatical universals.

It is not wise to assume that every language can follow a predetermined pattern of grammatical description as it was assumed by early grammarians (assuming the description of Latin grammar as a co-ordinate system (Hockett 1966:4)). However, one can assume that every language has a grammatical system and that these grammatical systems have points of contact and similarities. I quote here four out of ten points stated by Hockett (1966:22) that may help us to approach the matter.

- (1) In every human language there are at least two basic orders of magnitude in grammatical patterning (*viz. morphology and syntax*).
- (2) Apart from the three special categories of elements already mentioned (deictic elements, markers, and proper names), no human language has a grammatically homogeneous vocabulary.
- (3) A major form-class distinction reminiscent of "noun" versus "verb" is universal, though not always at the same size level.
- (4) Every human language has a common clause type with bipartite structure in which the constituents can reasonably be termed "topic" and "comment."

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<sup>13</sup> According to Crystal (1985:45 and 235): "Ceneme (cene-matics, tics) - A term used in glossematics to refer to *the minimal unit in a language's phonological system*." "Plereme - A term used by some linguists to refer to the minimal units of meaning in componential analysis – *what are often called 'semantic features' or 'semantic components'*. In glossematics, the term refers to the minimal unit of meaningful expression" (my emphasis).

Observe that the statements above mention pattern, magnitude, elements, form-class distinction, clause type and structure. These terms are the actual points of contact and similarities that allow one to study languages comparatively in terms of grammar. Looking for language universals from a grammatical perspective leads one to look for patterns in word order (syntactic relations).

In general terms Greenberg (1966:76-77) pointed out some universals of grammar that are relevant to our study. Greenberg uses three sets of criteria regarding word order to develop his analysis of universals. Two are basic for the development of our work at this stage. The first one is the existence of prepositions as against postpositions. The second one is the relative order of subject, verb and object in declarative sentences. In the languages he uses as samples,<sup>14</sup> several word orders are present but one is always dominant in a particular language. The six possibilities of word order are SVO, SOV, VSO, VOS, OSV and OVS, the first three occurring as dominant orders.<sup>15</sup> The comparison of declarative sentences with interrogative sentences show certain important characteristics of questions as universals. Greenberg assumes two main categories of questions: yes-no questions and specific word questions. Some important universals about questions are stated by Greenberg (1966:80):

When a yes-no question is differentiated from the corresponding assertion by an intonational pattern, the distinctive intonational features of each of these patterns are reckoned from the end of the sentence rather than from the beginning.

English, Portuguese (as spoken in Brazil) and Modern Hebrew<sup>16</sup> illustrate this point with a rise in pitch in the last stressed syllable of the sentence for yes-no questions

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<sup>14</sup> Greenberg (1966:75) describes the sample.

<sup>15</sup> See Dawson (1994:17).

<sup>16</sup> See Ultan (1978:219).

and a falling pitch for statements. It is important to note that **intonational studies** are a very important area in the study of questions that we are not in a position to use here. To study intonational patterns and analyse them we need to approach a currently spoken language, such as the ones mentioned above. However, we cannot analyse the intonational patterns of Biblical Hebrew since it has not been a spoken language for many centuries now. It is reasonable to assume that the spoken Biblical Hebrew used also intonational patterns to distinguish declaratives from interrogatives. However, one needs to remember that if a question is not marked at all, except by intonation in spoken language, it loses its identity as a question in written discourse. The solution for the writer is to give the reader some sort of clue, graphical (interrogation mark), syntactic (recreating the question with a different word order) or textual. This is a very common characteristic of Portuguese (which is predominantly a SVO language without auxiliary verbs), where there is no word order inversion. Some sort of clue is important to understand a question as a question in written language where "You ate chocolate" and "Did you eat chocolate?" correspond to "Você comeu chocolate" and "Você comeu chocolate?" As one can see the only difference between the two sentences in Portuguese is the interrogation mark.

So far in this section we have learned that intonation is a very important subject when one studies questions. Ultan (1978:218) states that "among clause-level Q-features, intonation holds the first rank." However, we cannot study questions in Biblical Hebrew based on any intonational criteria. We assume that one must look for other clues when working with written texts. This is innate to the linguistic analysis of a written language from a speech community that no longer exists (see Miller, 1992:13).

Three other important universals are stated by Greenberg (1966) that concern our study:

With well more than chance frequency, when question particles or affixes are specified in position by reference to the sentence as a whole, if initial, such elements are found in prepositional languages, and, if final, in postpositional.

Inversion of statement order so that verb precedes subject occurs only in languages where the question word or phrase is normally initial. This same inversion occurs in yes-no questions only if it also occurs in interrogative word questions.

If a language has dominant order VSO in declarative sentences, it always puts interrogative words or phrases first in interrogative word questions; if it has dominant order SOV in declarative sentences, there is never such an invariant rule.<sup>17</sup>

This last case (dominant VSO) is the case of Biblical Hebrew. In the 91 instances where interrogative words (אי, כמה, אן, איגה, למה, מי, מה) occur in Genesis the universal "it always puts interrogative words or phrases first in interrogative word questions" stated above holds. This is important for us to realise that, although not ideal, an approach to questions in Biblical Hebrew from a universal point of view may be helpful in the area of syntax.

Bolinger (1957) divides the identifying characteristics of questions into four classes, as quoted by Ultan (1978:214):

interrogative distribution (generally occurrence before a reply); syntax (inversion, interrogative words, interrogative tags, and other syntactic devices); interrogative intonation (predominance of terminal rising or high pitch); interrogative gesture (eyebrows lifted, head inclined forward, mouth left open at end of utterance, etc.).

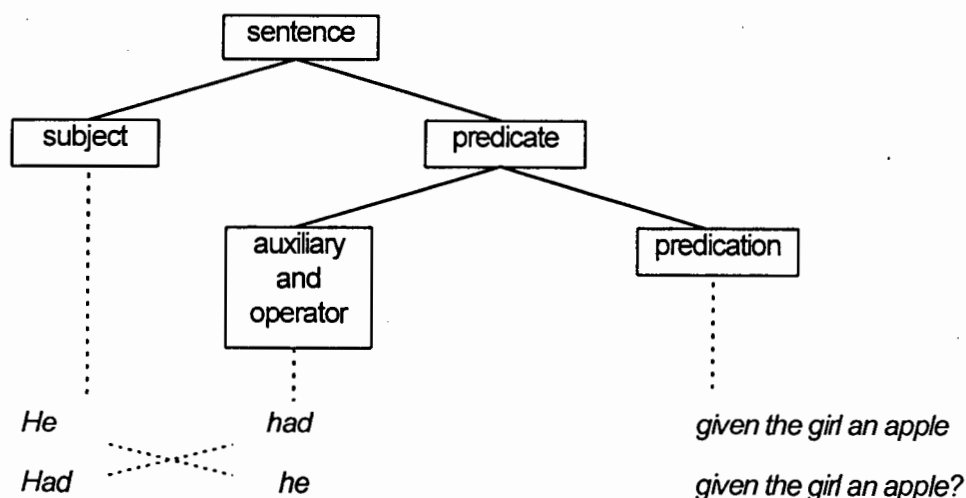
We discussed interrogative intonation above and concluded that for our study we need to look for other clues. Regarding interrogative gesture, for obvious reasons we

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<sup>17</sup> Ultan (1978:231n), however, notes that at least two languages do not conform to this universal, viz. Samoan and Sango.



cannot apply it here. We are left with interrogative distribution and syntax categories. Ultan (1978) refines this classification, excluding interrogative gesture because of the lack of descriptive material in the area. Ultan's classification is represented in three levels: (1) intonation, (2) order, and (3) segmental elements. Order and segmental elements are important features for our study. These include (1) **inversion**, (2) **tags**, (3) **interrogative particles** and (4) **interrogative words**. A brief summary of these features should clarify which kind of elements we need to look for in our discussion of questions in Biblical Hebrew. A simple model of the English sentence structure (Figure 1) will help to understand the explanation of these features (Quirk *et al.* 1985:79):



*Figure 1 English sentence structure*

**Inversion** is a common interrogative device where the constituents of a sentence are inverted with respect to their usual declarative order. Usual inversions are for Yes/No questions and information questions. The simple declarative sentence in the figure has an SVO order. By reversing the order of SV to VS the declarative

becomes a yes/no question. Similarly, sentences with *wh*-words have the operator<sup>18</sup> inversion:

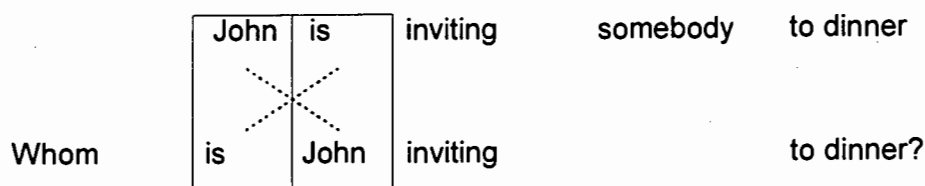


Figure 2 Inversion with *wh*-words

In terms of Ultan's languages sample (38 languages) the yes/no question inversion appears to be uncommon, occurring in only seven of them, while information questions inversions (normally using question words) are far more common. It is a general tendency to have inversion and sentence-initial position in the latter case. In information questions "the QW (interrogative words) substitutes for the item subjected to questioning" (Ultan, 1978:223). Quirk (1985:81) gives a few process rules for forming questions in English:

- (a) *Yes-no* Questions: Place the operator before the subject.
- (b) *WH*-Questions: First identify the *wh*-element, which is a phrase containing or consisting of the *wh*-word. Then:

- (i) If the *wh*-element is the subject, make no change in the statement order.
- (ii) If the *wh*-element is some other element (e.g. O, C, A), place it before the subject, and place the operator between the *wh*-element and the subject.

(c) ...

- (d) In (a), (b), and (c), if there is no operator in the corresponding statement, introduce the operator DO.

The following examples may be compared with the statement *Someone (has) borrowed my pencil*:

<sup>18</sup> Quirk *et al.* (1985:79) distinguishes between OPERATOR and PREDICATION as two subdivisions of the predicate. Operator is "normally the word which directly follows the subject".



- (a') Have you borrowed my pencil? [*yes-no question*]
- (b') (i) Who has borrowed my pencil? | [*wh-question*]  
 (ii) Why have you borrowed my pencil? |
- (c') ...
- (d') Did you borrow my pencil? | [with DO as operator]  
 Why did you borrow my pencil? |

Also very common is the use of **tags** as an interrogative device in many languages. English, for instance, has an extended use of question tags, usually following a declarative sentence or transforming a declarative into an interrogative. Tags can be a word, a phrase or a clause, frequently using an inversion of the declarative. In general we can find tags of two kinds: binary choice or multiple choice tags. Ultan (1978:224) classifies binary tags into two classes: "(1) a request for confirmation of the statement portion of the question, in essence a YNQ (yes-no question); (2) an alternative tag, in which a correlative conjunction or other similarly functioning constituent is tacked onto the statement." In class (1) above one can find (a) negative (like the French "*n'est ce pas?*"), (b) positive (a positive tag like "... is it?", (c) interjections (like the English interjection "... eh?") and other types. A common characteristic of these tags is the usual final sentence position. However, a few languages allow other positions for tags, including Hebrew (Israeli and Biblical) where the class (1) type (a) occurs in initial sentence position. This is the way some scholars interpret הלוא questions in Hebrew. We, however, do not use such terminology in our work.

**Interrogative particles** are a widespread device for the formation of questions in many languages. Ultan (1978: 227) points out that the "use of the term particle here is strictly speaking inaccurate". The reason for that is that in many languages the so-

called particle is a prefix (e.g. Biblical Hebrew) or suffix. They differ from interrogative words as they extend the interrogative function over the sentence as a whole, in contrast with interrogative words that focus on interrogative constituents of the sentence. English does not have such a feature.

Regarding its position in sentences Ultan's conclusion is that although questions particles may occur in any position in some languages, in most languages it tends to be fixed. In Biblical Hebrew the question prefix  $\text{וְ}$  is invariably found in clause initial position. One of Greenberg's universals stated on page 13 confirms this. This same particle  $\text{וְ}$  is used for forming the so-called tag questions in Biblical Hebrew.

Finally, in this section on language universals, we look at **interrogative words**. This is a characteristic of all languages without exception. Ultan (1978:228) defines interrogative words as "interrogative substitutes for nouns and a number of adverb-like words or phrases expressive of locative, temporal, enumerative, manner, purpose and other functions." Some languages will even have interrogative verb substitutes. An approximate universal is the presence of question pronouns for human / non-human or animate / inanimate classes. The animate / inanimate classification applies to interrogative words in Biblical Hebrew. According to Ultan, most languages tend to have interrogative words in the sentence initial position, but this is more unusual in languages with SOV order. We have already stated above (page 13) that in Biblical Hebrew question words are always in the sentence initial position.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> But see Joüon-Muraoka (§ 161.k) "An interrogative may occupy a non-initial position: e.g. Isaiah 49:21."

וְאָמַרְתָּ בְּלִבְּךָ מִי יֵלֶד־לִי אֶת־אֱלֹהִים וְאֲנִי שְׂכֻלָּה וְגִלְמוּדָה גִּלְהָה  
וְסוּרָה וְאֱלֹהִים מִי גִדֵּל הֵן אֲנִי וְשִׁאֲרֹתַי לְבָדִי אֱלֹהִים אֵיפֹה הֵם פִּי

It seems, however, that these are simple cases of embedded sentences.

We have learned so far that there are language universals and that it is possible to study some aspects of language from a universal perspective. Despite all the controversy around the subject, language universals give us a framework to compare and analyse the sentence structure of interrogatives in Biblical Hebrew. Language universals provide one with some guidelines to identify sentences as interrogatives (particles, question words, word order, etc.). In the words of Dawson (1994:20) “we can construct initial hypotheses about our data, based on language universals, where otherwise we might not notice enough of the signs in our language to make such observations.” Thus, language universals can be used to compare the grammar of interrogatives of other languages with Biblical Hebrew and to scrutinise the description of interrogatives in Biblical Hebrew that is presented in the section below.

### ***IN BIBLICAL HEBREW***

In this section we will describe the secondary Biblical Hebrew literature on questions. To do so, we will follow the description in Waltke and O'Connor (1990) because it is the most exhaustive of all the descriptions found, specially for question words (but not for the alleged unmarked questions and questions with interrogative particle  $\pi$  - for these two items we rely more heavily in the works of GKC and Joüon-Muraoka (1992)). One must be aware, however, that the levels of analysis in Waltke and O'Connor's syntax are not always clear. As Dawson (1994:27) points out about this syntax

On the one hand, it is a remarkable work, and welcome; yet it is also seriously disappointing on several levels: in the first place, the authors spent a vast amount of time on *semantic evaluation of forms* (which is grammar, not syntax), and, in all honesty, very little time on *syntax itself*.

One must also note that, as pointed out by Van der Merwe (1994:21), Waltke and O'Connor "resist the strong claims of discourse grammarians (p.55) for both theoretical and practical reasons and prefer to gather the great wealth of individual studies carried out in terms of the traditional approach." This clear choice made by these grammarians also contributes to the problems in the levels of analysis presented in the grammar. On the other hand, the wealth of information that they present the reader proves to be an important source of information.

As we go through the description of interrogatives in Biblical Hebrew as found in Waltke and O'Connor we will point out the problems regarding the remarks above by Dawson and Van der Merwe and engage with the work of other grammarians to enrich the arguments.

Waltke and O'Connor (1990) (from now on WO) start the chapter on interrogatives with a brief description of English interrogatives and their grammatical peculiarities. The description of English interrogatives is used to introduce the discussion of Biblical Hebrew interrogatives. WO (§18.1.c) classify five question types for Biblical Hebrew: (1) questions of fact, yes-no questions or polar questions (2) questions of circumstance, (3) alternative questions, (4) exclamatory questions, and (5) rhetorical questions.<sup>20</sup>

*Table 1 - Classification of question types in Biblical Hebrew*

1	הֲאֵרָד אַחֲרֵי פְּלִשְׁתִּים	Shall I go down after the Philistines? 1 Sam 14:37
2	וְלָמָּה יָרַע לְבָבְךָ	And why is your heart sad? 1 Sam 1:8
3	הֲנֵלֵךְ אֶל-רָמֹת גִּלְעָד לְמִלְחָמָה אִם-נִחָדֵל	... shall we go to Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall we forbear? 1 Kgs 22:15
4	מַה-טֹּבוֹ אֹהֲלֶיךָ יַעֲקֹב	... how fair are your tents, O Jacob ... Num 24:5

<sup>20</sup> Unless otherwise stated, the translation of the Hebrew is from RSV.

WO (§ 18.1.d) discuss interrogatives according to four major divisions, which are the “four major parts of the interrogative-indefinite vocabulary of Hebrew: (1) the animate pronoun, (2) the inanimate pronoun, (3) locative particles, and (4) temporal particles.”<sup>21</sup> In our description we add a more extensive treatment of interrogatives marked by the interrogative particle הָ and the alleged unmarked interrogatives in Biblical Hebrew, which are relegated to a short paragraph and a few footnotes in WO. Thus, one finds below a discussion of (1) the interrogatives marked by the particle הָ and alleged unmarked interrogatives, (2) interrogatives marked by the animate pronoun, (3) interrogatives marked by the inanimate pronoun, (4) interrogatives marked by the locative particles, and (5) interrogatives marked by temporal particles.

### *1. Particle הָ and Alleged Unmarked Interrogatives*

WO first point out the use of the interrogative particle הָ (sometimes הַ) to form questions of fact and alternative questions in Biblical Hebrew. However, WO point out in a footnote (§ 18.1.c n1) that the interrogative particles are not necessary to characterise a question. They say that “Its character as a question was presumably signalled in speech by intonation.” A similar view can be found in Gesenius-Kautzsch (German version 1896, § 150) and is followed by many Biblical Hebrew grammarians.<sup>22</sup> However, GKC (§ 150 a n1) points out restrictions by Mitchell (1908:115-129) regarding non-marked questions. Footnote 1 says that Mitchell

<sup>21</sup> Because I follow WO in their description I also use their terminology regarding the interrogative words, viz. animate pronoun, inanimate pronoun, locative particles, etc).

<sup>22</sup> See also Davidson (1902:166), Müller (1883:97), Joüon-Muraoka (§ 161.a), Brockelmann (1956:54), Sperber (1966:622).

restricts the number of these occurrences to 39, 12 of which he attributes to textual corruption. In Biblical Hebrew these so-called non-marked questions are sentences that usually follow the standard declarative word order (VSO - in nominal sentences SO), do not carry an interrogative particle and are normally translated as questions because of their context. Joüon-Muraoka (§ 161.a), however, says “Sometimes the question appears further indicated by word order” (example 9, Table 2, page 34). The grammar also indicates that the “omission of the interrogative  $\text{וְ}$  is common after  $\text{וְ}$  introducing an apposition” (see example 28, Table 2, page 34). Furthermore, it says that “this type of sentence is particularly frequent with a pronoun” (see examples 6, 4, 35, 38, 39, 40, 45, Table 2, page 34). Thus, of the grammars investigated, Joüon-Muraoka is the only one that indicates alternative ways of marking questions that are not prefixed by the interrogative particle. These assumptions are investigated more thoroughly at the end of our sample analysis, page 158)

The view that these lexically and grammatically unmarked questions were signalled as such by intonation cannot be verified. We have already acknowledged the importance of intonational studies for questions (page 12), but also indicated that they have little value for identifying questions in a “written language”.<sup>23</sup> See Table 2 on page 34 for the most common examples of these alleged questions.

Early in this chapter the difference between questions with the interrogative particle  $\text{וְ}$  and question words was pointed out (page 17). Basically, questions using the interrogative particle are used to form polar questions (yes-no questions) and to introduce disjunctive questions. A third use would be with the negative  $\text{לֹא}$  ( $\text{הֲלֹא}$ ) which was described above (page 16) as tag questions. In these three cases the position of the particle is always sentence initial and it may occur before nominal or

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<sup>23</sup> This term is preferred over “dead language”. According to Miller (1992:13) “The issue is not that

verbal sentences.  $\pi$  is used "when the questioner is wholly uncertain as to the answer to be expected" (GKC § 150 d). A common use for the particle pointed out by grammarians is for exclamations. It is, however, necessary to be clear regarding this terminology because when using it we are dealing with functional categories. In terms of sentence classification in English we usually find declaratives, interrogatives, imperatives and exclamatives.<sup>24</sup> These sentences types are defined by their syntactic form in English. For instance, Quirk *et al.* (1985:803) state:

(I) Declaratives are sentences in which the subject is present and generally precedes the verb.

(II) Interrogatives are sentences which are formally marked in one of two ways:

(i) yes-no interrogatives: the operator is placed in front of the subject.

(ii) wh-interrogatives: the interrogative wh-element is positioned initially.

(III) Imperatives are sentences which normally have no overt grammatical subject, and whose verb has the base form.

(IV) Exclamatives are sentences which have an initial phrase introduced by what or how, usually with subject verb order.

In terms of discourse function we find (Quirk *et al.* 1985:803ff):

(a) Statements are primarily used to convey information

(b) Questions are primarily used to seek information on a specific point.

(c) Directives are primarily used to instruct somebody to do something.

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there are no living speakers, but that we know the language only through its written records."

<sup>24</sup> Scholars will differ regarding these categories. Lyons (1981) for instance assumes that only three categories are universal: making statements, asking questions and issuing commands.

- (d) Exclamations are primarily used for expressing the extent to which the speaker is impressed by something.

What happens is that the syntactic class is not always associated with the functional class. Thus, an interrogative sentence may have an exclamatory function, or a rhetorical question may have a statement function. It is important then that we observe which of these classifications is meant by the different grammarians. For instance, Joüon-Muraoka (§ 161.b) calls the particle ה (and also הלא) an interrogative adverb (also GKC § 100 i); however he states that “the adverb ה, which is common for questions, sometimes has an exclamatory nuance.” This is a typical case where the syntactic device does not match the functional classification.

GKC (§ 150 e) notes that “A few passages deserve special mention, in which the use of the interrogative is altogether different from our idiom, since it serves merely to express the conviction that the contents of the statement are well known to the hearer, and are unconditionally admitted by him.” This function is contrary to the one stated above about the use of the particle ה in simple questions: “when the questioner is wholly uncertain as to the answer to be expected” (GKC § 150 d). Table 3 on page 34 shows a few examples of sentences introduced by the particle ה with an alleged exclamative use. As Joüon-Muraoka (§ 162.a) points out “The line between question and exclamation is often ill-defined.” In most cases one should say that it is unnecessary. This point is yet more relevant when we look at the use of interrogative words that can also be used as exclamatives (example 4, Table 1, page 19). The same sort of unclear usage applies to הלא (or הלווא). Brongers (1981:177-189) suggests, on account of contemporary translations, many different uses for sentences introduced by the particle: for genuine questions expecting positive answers or negative answers; for questions marked by reproach; speech to ask for attention; for emphatic stress (rather, certainly, surely, indeed, exactly) and other



alternative renderings (except, only, please). Brongers (1981:189), however, concludes that he is “fully aware of the subjective character” of some of his distinctions.

A less controversial use of the particle  $\text{וְ}$  is in disjunctive questions. Normally the first member is introduced by the particle  $\text{וְ}$  and the second is introduced by  $\text{אִם}$ ,  $\text{וְאִם}$ ,  $\text{וְ}$  or  $\text{וְאִם}$ . WO calls it alternative questions (example 3, Table 1, page 19). It also occurs as a double question ( $\text{וְאִם-אִם-וְ}$ ). Joüon-Muraoka (§ 161.e) states that “A disjunctive question is sometimes a mere stylistic feature, used in cases of synonymous parallelism, e.g. Gen 37:8.”  $\text{וְ}$  is also used in indirect questions.

A further discussion about questions using  $\text{וְ}$  is the fact that originally, without the Masoretic signs, the definite article and the particle were absolutely identical in form. Sperber (1966:625) states that they were also identical in pronunciation and that “The context excluded the possibility of confusion.” He further says that “It is solely due to Masoretic schematization that the tendency became prevalent to differentiate between the two functions of the preposition by way of vocalisation.” This position, however, seems to be isolated. It is obvious that the form in both cases was identical, but to assume that pronunciation was identical lacks support of any kind. Besides that, unless otherwise indicated, it is wise to assume that the MT represents the grammar (including phonology) of biblical times (see WO § 1.6).

## 2. *The Animate Pronoun - ׀*

As we pointed out above, the animate pronoun is part of the “four major parts of the interrogative-indefinite vocabulary of Hebrew: (1) the animate pronoun, (2) the inanimate pronoun, (3) the locative particles, and (4) the temporal particles” (WO § 18.1.d). These are similar to the *wh*-words in English and their use is more straightforward than the interrogatives discussed above. The animate pronoun  $\text{׀}$

does not vary for gender and number and sometimes may even refer to a neuter noun (WO § 18.2, GKC § 137 a). מי is found in three case functions (nominative, genitive and accusative) as the examples:

1	מי הגיד לך כי עירם אתה	Who told you that you were naked? Gen 3:11
2	בת-מי את	... whose daughter you are. Gen 24:23
3	את-מי אשלח	Whom shall I send ...? Is 6:8

The most basic use of מי is to seek identification of persons in direct or indirect questions. Most frequently it occupies the initial position in the sentence but not always (see note 19). מי is also frequently used as an indefinite pronoun, also similar to the *wh*-words in English. WO (§ 18.2) classifies the interrogative uses of מי in simple clauses as:

- a predicate in verbless clauses. To elicit identification or classification.

מי-את	"Who are you?" Ruth 3:9
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- With demonstrative זה following it.

בן-מי-זה הנער אבנר	"Abner, whose son is this youth?" 1 Sam 17:55
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- With the repetition of the question word for emphatic purpose.

מי ומי ההלכים:	but who are to go? Ex 10:8
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- Associated with various partitive constructions

ומי ככל-עבדך בדוד נאמן וחתן המלך וסר אל-משמעתך ונכבד בביתך:	"And who among all your servants is so faithful as David, who is the king's son-in-law, and captain over your bodyguard, and honored in your house? 1 Sam 22:14
--	--

- Also Jdg 21:8; 2 Kgs 6:11

מי can also govern another clause (1 Sam 26:14; Ex 3:11). When it is embedded in another clause as a relative pronoun WO (§ 18.2.c) call it an indirect question and admit that it is a “blending of a relative with an interrogative sense.” We cannot see, however, any interrogative character in the sentences, but rather a purely relative sense.

1	לֹא יָדַעְתִּי מִי עָשָׂה אֶת־הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה	I do not know who has done this thing. Gen 21:26
2	וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ שְׂאֵל אֶת־בֶּן־מִי־זֶה הָעֶלֶם סִי	And the king said, “Inquire whose son the stripling is.” 1 Sam 17:56

Two other uses of מי pointed out by WO are exclamatory and rhetorical. Again the terminology used is not clear. WO (§ 18.2.f) use the ambiguous expression “exclamatory questions.” In other words, it is not clear whether the form or the function of an expression is referred to. They, however, admit the problem at later stage: “The considerable overlap among the four functional classes, notably of interrogative clauses and exclamations, is not our special concern here. Evaluation of difficult cases is a matter of more specialised study” (§ 40.1.a). The problem, however, as we see it, is not the overlap of the functional classes, but a problem of ill-defined functional categories. The same confusion applies to the descriptions in GKC (§ 150) and Joūon-Muraoka (§ 162.a). The description by Quirk *et al.* (1985:825) may be helpful concerning these distinctions (for English):

The exclamatory question is interrogative in structure, but has the illocutionary force of an exclamatory assertion. Typically it is a negative *yes-no* question with a final falling instead of rising tone ...

Concerning rhetorical questions they say:

The rhetorical question is interrogative in structure, but has the force of a strong assertion. It generally does not expect an answer ... There are also rhetorical *wh*-questions. The positive question is equivalent to a statement which the *wh*-element is replaced by a negative element: ... How can I [stress] help it? ["There is no reason why I can help it."]

It is obvious that the description for English grammar does not match the Hebrew. However, the distinctions made by Quirk *et al.* are helpful for our analysis. They illustrate the advantages of distinguishing between form and function, sentence type and discourse function. If the same holds for Biblical Hebrew, it is then necessary to have a good description of the sentence structure in Biblical Hebrew in order to describe its function(s). Thus, to define rhetorical questions in Biblical Hebrew it is first necessary to have a good description of the interrogative sentence structure in Biblical Hebrew. WO (§ 18.2.f) state:

Exclamatory and rhetorical questions in *מִי* must be recognised from their context, though there are patterns associated with each group. *Exclamatory questions* usually have a non-perfective verb, and the sense is desiderative: "Who will act?" > "Oh that someone would act!"

וַיִּתְאַוֶּה דָּוִד וַיֹּאמֶר מִי יִשְׁקֵנִי מֵיִם מִבְּאֵר  
בֵּית-לְחֶם אֲשֶׁר בַּשְּׁעָרִים:

And David said longingly, "O that someone would give me water to drink from the well of Bethlehem which is by the gate!"

2 Sam 23:15

הֵן יִחַתֵּף מִי יִשְׁיבֵנוּ מִי־יֹאמַר אֵלָיו  
מָה-תַּעֲשֶׂה:

Behold, he snatches away; who can hinder him? *Who will say to him*, What doest thou?

Job 9:12

וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְשָׁלוֹם מִי־יִשְׁמְנֵי שֵׁפֶט בְּאֶרֶץ

Absalom said moreover, "Oh that I were judge in the land!"

2 Sam 15:4

*Rhetorical* questions aim not to gain information but to give information with passion ... The rhetorical use of *מִי*, however, for self-abasement or for insult occurs within a consistent grammatical structure and is considered here.

WO (§ 18.2.g) quote Coats (1970:26) for this specific grammatical structure. The structure proposed by Coats consists of two elements:

- (i) Question constructed as noun clause with interrogative **מִי**, **מָה** with pronoun, name or noun.
- (ii) Assertion introduced by **כִּי**, **אֲשֶׁר** or *waw* consecutive imperfect around a verbal form.

The relation of the elements is described as follows (WO § 18.2.g n14):

The second element regularly picks up the object of the first element as the subject or object of the verb or the object of a preposition... [The pattern] poses a question..., then abases the noun or pronoun subject by an implied answer to the question. On the basis of the implied answer, the verb ... is negated.

(ii)	(i)	
כִּי־אֶהְיֶה חָתָן לַמֶּלֶךְ:	מִי אֲנֹכִי	Who am I... that I should be son-in-law to the king? 1 Sam 18:18
אֲשֶׁר אֶשְׁמַע בְּקוֹלוֹ	מִי יְהוָה	Who is the LORD, that I should heed his voice... Ex 5:2

The so-called rhetorical questions are dealt with more extensively in the first section of the sample analysis, Chapter 3.

### 3. *The Inanimate Pronoun - מָה*

The inanimate pronoun **מָה** is also found in three case functions (nominative, genitive and accusative (most common)) with several distinct vocalisations,<sup>25</sup> which are pointed in the examples below. It is also frequently combined with prepositions (e.g., example 2):

1	מָה־פָּשְׁעִי מָה חַטָּאתִי כִּי דָלַקְתָּ אֲחֵרַי:	What is my offence? What is my sin, that you have hotly pursued me? Gen 31:36
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<sup>25</sup> For the vocalisation see GKC (§ 37), Joüon-Muraoka (§ 37).

2	וַיֹּאמֶר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה בְּמָה אֲדַע כִּי אֵירֶשְׁנָה:	But he said, "O Lord GOD, how am I to know that I shall possess it?" Gen 15:8
3	מָה עָשִׂיתָ	"What have you done?" Gen 4:10

Although one can find a wide variety of uses for the inanimate *מה*, its uses are not controversial. For the sake of completeness we list the most common syntactic uses of the inanimate pronoun according to WO (§ 18.3).

There are six common uses of it without prepositions of which the common sense of the pronoun is "what", with the exception of one case (see case 4 below).

1) As the direct object of a verb.

מָה אֶתֶּן-לָךְ	What shall I give you? Gen 30:31
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2) With demonstrative *זה* to add "vividness".

מָה-זֹּאת עָשִׂיתָ	What is this that you have done? Gen 3:13
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3) Further specified by an accusative of specification.

וּמָה-בְּיָדִי רָעָה:	What guilt is on my hands? 1 Sam 26:18
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4) Meaning "why?", sometimes with *זה*.

מָה-תִּצְעַק אֵלַי	Why do you cry to me? Ex 14:15 <sup>26</sup>
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5) In verbless interrogative clauses with *lamed of interest*, usually with personal object, but also with double objects.

<sup>26</sup> "What do you cry to me for?" makes perfect sense and the interrogative word retains its original meaning.

מה־לך הָגָר

What troubles you, Hagar?  
Gen 21:17

מה־לך לְסַפֵּר חֻקֵּי

What right have you to recite my  
statutes?  
Ps 50:16

6) Past time reference with הָיָה.

מה־זֶה הָיָה לְבֶן־קִישׁ

What has come over the son of  
Kish?  
1 Sam 10:11

With prepositions the inanimate pronoun takes a variety of senses which are pointed out below.

1) Most common with לְ / לָמָּה meaning “why?”.

לָמָּה חָרָה לְךָ וְלָמָּה נָפְלוּ

Why are you angry, and why has  
your countenance fallen?  
Gen 4:6

2) Sometimes it has a quasi-rhetorical sense introducing an undesirable alternative (in some cases preceded by a relative pronoun).

שְׁלַחֲנִי לָמָּה אֶמִיתְךָ:

Let me go; why should I kill you?  
1 Sam 19:17

אֲשֶׁר לָמָּה יִרְאֶה אֶת־פְּנֵיכֶם

...my lord the king...should see  
that you...  
[otherwise he will see you]  
WO translation  
Dan 1:10

3) Combined with כּ the pronoun means “in what?, on what?” and “how?” With כַּ meaning “how many?” or “how much?”

בְּמָה יִשְׁכֹּב  
Ex 22:26

In what else shall he sleep?  
Ex 22:27

כַּמָּה יָמֵי שְׁנֵי חַיֶּיךָ:

How many are the days of the  
years of your life?  
Gen 47:8

4) May combine with עד ("how long?") and על ("on what basis?", "why?").

בְּנֵי אִישׁ עַד־מָה כְּבוֹדִי לְכִלְמָה  
Ps 4:3

O men, how long shall my honor  
suffer shame?

Ps 4:2

עַל מָה תִּכּוּ עוֹד

Why will you still be smitten...?

Is 1:5

The pronoun is also used for exclamatory questions involving either an adjective or a verb.

מַה־יָּקָר  
Ps 36:8

How precious

Ps 36:7

וּמַה־נִּצְטָדֵק

Or how can we clear ourselves?

Gen 44:16

One can also find מה used for rhetorical questions involving similar principles of the self-abasement formulas with מי described above (page 28).

כִּי מָה עֲבָדְךָ הַפֶּלֶב כִּי יַעֲשֶׂה  
הַדָּבָר הַגָּדוֹל הַזֶּה

What is your servant, who is but a  
dog, that he should do this great  
thing?

2 Kgs 8:13

מַה־אֶנוֹשׁ כִּי־תִזְכְּרֶנּוּ  
Ps 8:4

What is man that thou art mindful  
of him...?

Ps 8:5

מה is used for rhetorical questions that expect strong negative answers.

בֵּינִי וּבֵינְךָ מַה־הוּא

...what is that between you and  
me?

Gen 23:15

#### 4. The Locative Particles

Under question words we still need to describe the locative particles. They are part of the *wh*-words in English. According to WO (§ 18.4) they are "organised around אי "where?", including a variety of compounds (e.g., אי מוֹזֶה) and related forms (e.g., (איפֶּה). The following uses are described by WO:



1) **אי** as a simple locative particle (alone or with **זה**).

<b>אי הָבֵל אָחִיךָ</b>	Where is Abel your brother? Gen 4:9
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2) With pronominal suffixes

<b>אַיִכָּה</b>	Where are you? Gen 3:9
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3) As a directional locative - **אי מזה**.

<b>אַיִמָּזָה בָּאת</b>	Where have you come from...? Gen 16:8
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4) Also with the sense of “where?” and related to **אי** are **איה** and **איפה**. **איה** is used only in nominal clauses and **איפה** is used in both, verbal and nominal clauses.

<b>אֵיָה שָׂרָה אִשְׁתֶּךָ</b>	Where is Sarah your wife? Gen 18:9
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<b>אִיפֹה שְׁמוּאֵל וְדָוִד</b>	Where are Samuel and David? 1 Sām 19:22
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<b>אִיפֹה לֹא יִשְׁגַּלְתָּ</b>	Where have you not been lain with? Jer 3:2
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5) Another sense for words related to **אי** is “how?” and includes **איך**, **איכה** and **איככה** (the last two are rare).

<b>אֵיךְ אַתֶּם נוֹעְצִים</b>	How do you advise me to answer this people? 1 Kgs 12:6
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<b>אִיכָה אֶשָּׂא לְבַדִּי</b>	How can I bear alone...you...? Deut 1:12
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<b>אִיכָכָה אֶלְבָּשֶׁנָּה</b>	...how could I put it on? Cant 5:3
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6) Also related to **אי** are **אן** and **מאין** meaning respectively “where?” and “whence?”.

WO considers the probability of the unattested form **איין** be the source of both.

אָן הַלֶּכְתֶּם      Where did you go?  
1 Sam 10:14

מֵאַיִן תָּבֹא      Whence have you come?  
Job 1:7

7) Two other related forms, which are almost identical are אָנָה and אֵנָה. The first is probably אָן with directive *h* and the second is an extended form of אָנָה. Both forms usually mean “whither, where?”.

וְאַנָּה תֵּלֵכִי      ...where are you going?  
[Whither are you going]  
WO translation  
Gen 16:8  
אָנָּה אֲנַחֲנוּ עָלִים      Whither are we going up?  
Deut 1:28

A last use pointed out by WO is the locative sense of אָנָּה extended in the phrase אֶד-אָנָּה meaning “how long?, till when?”.

עַד-אָנָּה מֵאַנְתָּם      How long do you refuse...?  
Ex 16:28

### 5. Temporal Particle

The adverb מתי is only briefly cited by WO and it is a temporal adverb that means “when?” It is often used with ל and עד, “when?” and “how long?”

וְעַתָּה מָתִי אֶעֱשֶׂה גַם-אֲנֹכִי לְבֵיתִי:      But now when shall I provide for  
my own household also?  
Gen 30:30

Another question word that must be mentioned is the adverb מדוע. It is used as a question word meaning “why?” The difference between מדוע and למה, if there is one, is yet to be determined. Some scholars argue that the words are semantically different (e.g. Jepsen (1967:106-113), Nakarai (1982:45-50) Hyman (1987:173-

183)). Hyman, for instance, argues that in the book of Genesis at least, מדוע questions are used to seek information while למה questions are critical/corrective or expressive/emotive. Against this position (specifically Jepsen's article) Barr (1985:33) asserts that "As regards the difference between *M* and *L*, it suggests that there is very little real distinction of meaning but that a multitude of syntactic and stylistic factors affect the choice of one term against the other."

Table 2 - Alleged non-marked questions in Biblical Hebrew

Letters following the numbers in column one correspond to: GKC 1910 (G); Müller 1883 (M); Davidson 1901 (D); Joüon-Muraoka 1991 (J); Waltke and O'Connor (W); Sperber 1966 (S). Shaded items correspond to instances where Mitchell (1908) attributes the absence of the interrogative particle to textual corruption. Items marked with border lines in the first column are the instances which Mitchell deems that the sentences were wrongly rendered as interrogatives and classified as instances of the omission of the interrogative ה. The translations are from RSV which sometimes does not translate them as questions.

(1) G,D	אַחֲרֵי כִלְתִּי הִיְתָה־לִּי עֲדָנָה וְאֲדֹנִי זָקֵן:	After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure? Gen 18:12
(2) G,D, S	אֲתָהּ זֶה בְּנִי עֶשָׂו <sup>27</sup>	Are you really my son Esau? Gen 27:24
(3) G	הֲנִזְבַּח אֶת־תּוֹעֵבֹת מִצְרַיִם לְעֵינֵיהֶם וְלֹא יִסְקְלֻנוּ: Ex 8:22	If we sacrifice offerings abominable to the Egyptians before their eyes, will they not stone us? Ex 8:26
(4) G,J	וַעֲתָה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הוֹרִישׁ אֶת־הָאֲמֹרִי מִפְּנֵי עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאַתָּה תִּירָשְׁנוּ:	So then the LORD, the God of Israel, dispossessed the Amorites from before his people Israel; and are you to take possession of them? Jdg 11:23
(5) G,D, J	הִנֵּה לֹאֲבִי וְלֹאֲמִי לֹא הִגַּדְתִּי וְלֹךְ אֲגִיד:	Behold, I have not told my father nor my mother, and shall I tell you? Jdg 14:16
(6) G,S	שָׂאוּל יִמְלֹךְ עָלֵינוּ	Shall Saul reign over us? 1 Sam 11:12
(7) S	כִּי עַתָּה לֹא־רָבַחְתָּ מְכָה בַּפְּלִשְׁתִּים:	For now the slaughter among the Philistines has not been great. 1 Sam 14:30
(8) S	הֲנִנִּי אָמוֹת:	I will die. 1 Sam 14:43

<sup>27</sup> The Samaritan Hebrew Pentateuch reads הָאֲתָהּ as in verse 21.

(9) G,D, J,S	שָׁלֵם בּוֹאָךְ:	Do you come peaceably? 1 Sam 16:4
(10) G,D	כִּי אִם־יָדַע אֲדַע הִרְעָה מֵעַם אָבִי כִּי־כָלָתָה לָּבוֹא עָלֶיךָ וְלֹא אֶתָּה אֲגִיד לָךְ ס:	If I knew that it was determined by my father that evil should come upon you, would I not tell you? 1 Sam 20:9
(11) W, S	חָסֵר מְשֻׁגָּעִים אֲנִי כִי־הִבָּאתָם אֶת־זֶה לְהִשְׁתַּגֵּעַ עָלַי	Do I lack madmen, that you have brought this fellow to play the mad- man in my presence? 1 Sam 21:16
(12) G,D	יִתֵּן בֶּן־יִשְׁשִׁי שָׂדוֹת לְכָל־כֶּם יִשִּׁים שָׂרֵי וְכִרְמִים אֲלֵפִים וְשָׂרֵי מְאוֹת: כִּי קִשְׁרְתֶּם כָּל־כֶּם עָלַי	Will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, will he make you all commanders of thou- sands and commanders of hun- dreds, that all of you have conspired against me? 1 Sam 22:7,8
(13) D, S	הַיּוֹם הִחֲלֵתִי לִי־שְׂאוֹל לִי־שְׂאֵל־לוֹ בְּאֱלֹהִים	Is today the first time that I have in- quired of God for him? 1 Sam 22:15
(14) G	וְכִי־יִמָּצֵא אִישׁ אֶת־אֹיְבּוֹ וְשָׁלְחוֹ בְּדֶרֶךְ טוֹבָה 1 Sam 24:20	For if a man finds his enemy, will he let him go away safe? 1 Sam 24:19
(15) G,D	וְלִקְחֹתִי אֶת־לֶחְמִי וְאֶת־מִימִי וְאֶת טֶבַחֲתִי אֲשֶׁר טֶבַחֲתִי לַגִּזּוֹי וְנָתַתִּי לְאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר לֹא יָדַעְתִּי אִי מִזֶּה הֵמָּה:	Shall I take my bread and my water and my meat that I have killed for my shearers, and give it to men who come from I do not know where? 1 Sam 25:11
(16) S	אֲרֹדֶף אַחֲרֵי הַגִּדּוֹד־הַזֶּה הַאֲשָׁנָנִי	Shall I pursue after this band? Shall I overtake them? 1 Sam 30:8
(17) 33 D	וַיֹּאמֶר דָּוִד מִפִּיבֹשֶׁת	And David said, "Mephibosheth!" 2 Sam 9:6
(18) G,D, J	הָאָרוֹן וְיִשְׂרָאֵל וִיהוּדָה יֹשְׁבִים בְּסֻכּוֹת וְאֲדָנִי יוֹאָב וְעַבְדֵי אֲדָנִי עַל־פְּנֵי הַשָּׂדֶה חֲנִים וְאֲנִי אָבוֹא אֶל־בֵּיתִי לֶאֱכֹל וְלִשְׁתּוֹת וְלִשְׁכַּב עִם־אִשְׁתִּי	The ark and Israel and Judah dwell in booths; and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field; shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing. 2 Sam 11:11
(19) G	תָּמוּל בּוֹאָךְ וְהַיּוֹם יֵאָנוּעַךְ יֵאָנוּעַךְ עִמָּנוּ לִלְכֹת וְאֲנִי הוֹלֵךְ עַל אֲשֶׁר־אֲנִי הוֹלֵךְ	You came only yesterday, and shall I today make you wander about with us, seeing I go I know not where? 2 Sam 15:20

(20) G,M, D	זֶה חֶסֶדְךָ אֶת-רֵעֶךָ	Is this your loyalty to your friend? 2 Sam 16:17
(21) G,D, J,W, S	שְׁלוֹם לְנָעַר לְאַבְשָׁלוֹם <sup>28</sup>	Is it well with the young man Ab- salom? 2 Sam 18:29
(22) D, S	הַיּוֹם יוּמָת אִישׁ בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל 2 Sam 19:23	Shall any one be put to death in Is- rael this day? 2 Sam 19:22
(23) D	כִּי-לֹא-כֵן בֵּיתִי עִם-אֵל כִּי בְרִית עוֹלָם שָׁם לִיעָרוּכָה בְּכָל וּשְׁמֶרָה כִּי-כָל-יִשְׁעִי וְכָל-חֲפֶזִּי כִי-לֹא יִצְמִיחַ:	Yea, does not my house stand so with God? For he has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and secure. For will he not cause to prosper all my help and my desire? 2 Sam 23:5
(24) G,D, J, S	אֲדֹנִי הַמֶּלֶךְ אַתָּה אָמַרְתָּ אֲדֹנִיָּהוּ יִמְלֹךְ אַחֲרָי וְהוּא יֵשֵׁב עַל-כִּסְאִי:	My lord the king, have you said, Adonijah shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne? 1 Kgs 1:24
(25) D, S	אַתָּה עַתָּה תַעֲשֶׂה מְלוּכָה עַל-יִשְׂרָאֵל	Do you now govern Israel? 1 Kgs 21:7
(26) G,D	לֹא-לִבִּי הָלַךְ כְּאִשֶּׁר הִפְדֹּ-אִישׁ מֵעַל מִרְכַּבְתּוֹ לִקְרַאתְךָ	Did I not go with you in spirit when the man turned from his chariot to meet you? 2 Kgs 5:26
(27) D	וְאַתָּה תִּנָּצֵל:	And shall you be delivered? 2 Kgs 19:11
(28) G,J	גַּם אֶת-הַטּוֹב נִקְבַּל מֵאֵת הָאֱלֹהִים וְאֶת-הָרָע לֹא נִקְבַּל	Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? Job 2:10
(29) G	זָכֹר-נָא כִּי-בָחַמְרָ עָשִׂיתָנִי וְאֶל-עָפָר תְּשִׁיבֵנִי:	Remember that thou hast made me of clay; and wilt thou turn me to dust again? Job 10:9
(30) S	לְנֹצֵחַ יַעֲשֵׂן אַפְּךָ בְּצֹאן מִרְעִיתְךָ:	Why does thy anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture? Ps 74:1
(31) G	יְפוּצוּ מִעֵינֶיךָ חוּצָה בְּרִחְבוֹת פְּלִגֵּי-מַיִם:	Should your springs be scattered abroad, streams of water in the streets? Prov 5:16
(32) D,S	אֵת שְׂאֵהָכָה נִפְשִׁי רְאִיתָם:	Have you seen him whom my soul loves? Songs 3:3

<sup>28</sup> Mitchell (1908) reads as in verse 32.

(33) S	כְּשֶׁלֶג יִלְבִּינוּ ... בְּצֶמֶר יִהְיוּ:	They shall be as white as snow ... they shall become like wool. Is 1:18
(34) G	לֶחֶם יִדָּק	Does one crush bread grain? Is 28:28
(35) G,J	הִנֵּה אַתָּה שָׁמַעְתָּ אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ מְלָכֵי אַשּׁוּר לְכָל-הָאֲרָצוֹת לְהַחֲרִימָם וְאַתָּה תִּנָּצֵל:	Behold, you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, destroying them utterly. And shall you be delivered? Is 37:11
(36) G	חֲצִיו שָׂרַפְתִּי בְּמוֹ-אֵשׁ וְאַף אֶפִּיתִי עַל-גִּחְלִיו וַיִּתְּרוּ לְתוֹעֵבָה לֶחֶם אֲצִלָּה בָּשָׂר וְאָכַל אֶעֱשֶׂה לְכוֹל עֵץ אֶסְגֹּד:	Half of it I burned in the fire, I also baked bread on its coals, I roasted flesh and have eaten; and shall I make the residue of it an abomina- tion? Shall I fall down before a block of wood? Is 44:19b
(37) S	לִשְׁתּוֹת מִי שְׁחֹר ... לִשְׁתּוֹת מִי נָהָר:	To drink the waters of the Nile? ... To drink the waters of the Euphrates? Jer 2:18
(38) G,D, J	כִּי הִנֵּה בָעִיר אֲשֶׁר נִקְרָא-שְׁמִי עָלֶיהָ אֲנֹכִי מַחֵל לְהִרְעֹ וְאַתֶּם הַנָּקָה תִּנָּקוּ	For behold, I begin to work evil at the city which is called by my name, and shall you go unpunished? Jer 25:29
(39) G,J	וְאַתָּה תִּבְקֶשׁ-לָךְ גְּדֻלוֹת	And do you seek great things for yourself? Jer 45:5
(40) G,J	הִנֵּה אֲשֶׁר-אֵין מִשְׁפָּטָם לִשְׁתּוֹת הַכּוֹס שָׁתוּ יִשְׁתּוּ וְאַתָּה הוּא נָקָה תִּנָּקָה לֹא תִּנָּקָה	If those who did not deserve to drink the cup must drink it, will you go un- punished? Jer 49:12
(41) G	מִפִּי עֲלִיּוֹן לֹא תֵצֵא הַרְעוֹת וְהַטּוֹב:	Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that good and evil come? Lam 3:38
(42) S	וְנַעֲשֶׂה עוֹד לְמִלְאכָה	Can it ever be used for anything! Ezek 15:5
(43) S	תִּצְלַח	Will it thrive? Ezek 17:9
(44) S	וְנִמְלֹט:	Can he break the covenant and yet escape? Ezek 17:15
(45) G,D, J, S	וּבִשְׂאֵת מִתְּנִיתֵיכֶם בְּהַעֲבִיר בְּנֵיכֶם בָּאֵשׁ אַתֶּם נִטְמָאִים לְכָל-גִּלּוּלֵיכֶם עַד-הַיּוֹם וְאֲנִי אֶדְרֹשׁ לָכֶם בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל	When you offer your gifts and sacri- fice your sons by fire, you defile yourselves with all your idols to this day. And shall I be inquired of by you, O house of Israel? Ezek 20:31
(46) S	לֹא-אֶפְקֹד	I will not punish Hos 4:14



(47) G, S	עָתָה יִרְעֶם יְהוָה כִּכְבֹּשׁ בְּמִדְבָּר: can the LORD now feed them like a lamb in a broad pasture? Hos 4:16
(48) S	וְאֲנֹכִי אֶפְדֶּם I would redeem them Hos 7:13
(49) G,D, S	וְאֲנִי לֹא אַחֻס׃ עַל־נִינְוָה הָעִיר הַגְּדוֹלָה And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city ...? Jon 4:11
(50) G	כִּי יִפְלֹא בְּעֵינֵי שְׂאֵרֵית הָעָם הַזֶּה בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם גַּם־בְּעֵינֵי יִפְלֹא נֶאֱמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת If it is marvellous in the sight of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvellous in my sight, says the LORD of hosts? Zech 8:6

Table 3 - Alleged exclamative use of the particle וְ

1	וַיֹּאמֶר מִי הַגִּיד לְךָ כִּי עֵרִים אָתָּה הַמֶּן־הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִיךָ לִבְלֹתִי אֲכַל־מִמֶּנּוּ אֲכַלְתָּ: He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" Gen 3:11
2	וַיֹּאמֶר הֲכִי קָרָא שְׁמוֹ יַעֲקֹב Esau said, "Is he not rightly named Jacob?" Gen 27:36
3	וַיֹּאמֶר לָבָן לְיַעֲקֹב הֲכִי־אָחִי אָתָּה וְעַבְדְּתָנִי חֲנָם הַגִּידָה לִּי מִה־מְשַׁכְּרֶתְךָ: Then Laban said to Jacob, "Because you are my kinsman, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what shall your wages be?" Gen 29:15
4	הֲלֹא־הֵמָּה בְּעֵבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן אַחֲרֵי דָרֹךְ מְבוֹא הַשָּׁמֶשׁ בְּאַרְצֵי הַכְּנָעָנִי הַיֹּשֵׁב בְּעֶרְבָה מוֹל הַגִּלְגָל אֶצֶל אֱלוֹנֵי מֶרְה: Are they not beyond the Jordan, west of the road, toward the going down of the sun, in the land of the Canaanites who live in the Arabah, over against Gilgal, beside the oak of Moreh? Deut 11:30
5	הֲלֹא צֹוָה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵךְ וּמַשְׁכֵּת בְּהַר תְּבוֹר וּלְקַחַת עִמָּךְ עֶשְׂרֵת אֲלָפִים אִישׁ מִבְּנֵי נַפְתָּלִי וּמִבְּנֵי זְבֻלֹן: The LORD, the God of Israel, commands you, Go, gather your men at Mount Tabor, taking ten thousand from the tribe of Naphtali and the tribe of Zebulun. Jdg 4:6
6	וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה הִנְגַּלְתָּ נִגְלִיתִי אֶל־בֵּית אָבִיךָ בְּהִיוֹתָם בְּמִצְרַיִם לְבֵית פַּרְעֹה: ... and said to him, Thus the LORD has said, I revealed myself to the house of your father when they were in Egypt subject to the house of Pharaoh. 1 Sam 2:27
7	הֲלוֹא הַחֲצִי מִמֶּךָ וְהַלְאָה: Is not the arrow beyond you? 1 Sam 20:37



8	הִידַעְתֶּם כִּי־לָנוּ רָמֹת גִּלְעָד וְאֲנַחְנוּ מְחַשִּׁים מִקְחָת אֹתָהּ מִיַּד מֶלֶךְ אֲרָם:	Do you know that Ramoth-gilead belongs to us, and we keep quiet and do not take it out of the hand of the king of Syria? 1 Kgs 22:3
9	הֲלוֹא לָכֶם לְדַעַת אֶת־הַמִּשְׁפָּט:	Is it not for you to know justice? Micah 3:1
10	הֲזֹאת יִדְעַת מִנִּי־עַד מִנִּי שֵׁם אָדָם עַל־יֶאֱרָץ:	Do you not know this from of old, since man was placed upon earth ... Job 20:4

### QUESTIONS IN THE SAMPLE TEXT

With this comprehensive (not exhaustive) catalogue of the surface level characteristics of questions in Biblical Hebrew we may now point out the marked questions in our sample text. Also, in comparison with an English translation, we point out alleged unmarked questions in Genesis 37-50. Table 4 on page 46 and Table 5 on page 47 summarise the questions in the sample text.

#### Gen 37:8

וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ אֶחָיו הַמֶּלֶךְ תִּמְלֹךְ עָלֵינוּ אִם־מִשׁוֹל  
תִּמְשָׁל בָּנוּ וַיּוֹסֶפוּ עוֹד שִׁנְאָה אֹתוֹ עַל־חֲלֻמֹּתָיו  
וְעַל־דִּבְרָיו:

*His brothers said to him, "Are you indeed to reign over us? Or are you indeed to have dominion over us?" So they hated him yet more for his dreams and for his words.*

#### Gen 37:10

וַיִּסְפֹּר אֶל־אָבִיו וְאֶל־אֶחָיו וַיִּגְעַר־בּוֹ אָבִיו  
וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ מָה הַחֲלוֹם הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר חֲלַמְתָּ הִבּוֹא  
נָבוֹא אָנִי וְאִמִּי וְאֶחָיִךְ לְהִשְׁתַּחֲוֹת לָךְ  
אֶרְצָה:

*But when he told it to his father and to his brothers, his father rebuked him, and said to him, "What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves to the ground before you?"*

#### Gen 37:13

וַיֹּאמֶר יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־יוֹסֵף הֲלוֹא אֶחָיִךְ רֹעִים  
בְּשֶׂכֶם לָכָה וְאֶשְׁלַחְךָ אֲלֵיהֶם וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ הִנְנִי:

*And Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers pasturing the flock at Shechem? Come, I will send you to them." And he said to him, "Here I am."*

**Gen 37:15**

וַיִּמְצָאֵהוּ אִישׁ וַהֲגָה תַּעֲה בַּשָּׂדֶה וַיִּשְׁאַלְהוּ  
הָאִישׁ לֵאמֹר מַה-תִּבְקֶשׁ:

*And a man found him wandering in the fields; and the man asked him, "What are you seeking?"*

**Gen 37:16**

וַיֹּאמֶר אֶת-אֶחָיו אֲנֹכִי מִבְקֶשׁ הַגִּידָה-נָא לִי  
אֵיפֹה הֵם רְעִים:

*"I am seeking my brothers," he said, "tell me, I pray you, where they are pasturing the flock."*

**Gen 37:26**

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוּדָה אֶל-אֶחָיו מַה-בִּצְעַ כִּי נַהַרֵּג  
אֶת-אֶחָינוּ וְנִכְסִינוּ אֶת-דָּמוֹ:

*Then Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is it if we slay our brother and conceal his blood?"*

**Gen 37:30**

וַיָּשָׁב אֶל-אֶחָיו וַיֹּאמֶר הִלָּד אֵינְנוּ וְאֲנִי  
אָנֹכִי אֲנִי-כָּא:

*And returned to his brothers, and said, "The lad is gone; and I, where shall I go?"*

**Gen 37:32**

וַיִּשְׁלְחוּ אֶת-כְּתֹנֶת הַפָּסִים וַיָּבִיאוּ אֶל-אָבִיהֶם  
וַיֹּאמְרוּ זֹאת מִצְאָנוּ הַכֹּהֵן-נָא הַכְּתֹנֶת בְּנֵךְ  
הוּא אִם-לֹא:

*And they sent the long robe with sleeves and brought it to their father, and said, "This we have found; see now whether it is your son's robe or not."*

**Gen 38:16**

וַיֵּט אֵלֶיהָ אֶל-הַדֶּרֶךְ וַיֹּאמֶר הִבֵּה-נָא אֲבוֹא  
אֵלַיִךְ כִּי לֹא יָדַע כִּי כְלָתוֹ הוּא וַתֹּאמֶר  
מַה-תִּתֶּן-לִי כִּי תָבוֹא אֵלַי:

*He went over to her at the road side, and said, "Come, let me come in to you," for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. She said, "What will you give me, that you may come in to me?"*

**Gen 38:17**

וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנֹכִי אֲשַׁלַּח גְּדִי-עִזִּים מִן-הַצֹּאן  
וַתֹּאמֶר אִם-תִּתֶּן עֲרֻבוֹן עַד שְׁלַחְךָ:

*He answered, "I will send you a kid from the flock." And she said, "Will you give me a pledge, till you send it?"*

**Gen 38:18**

וַיֹּאמֶר מָה הָעֶרְבוֹן אֲשֶׁר אֶתֶּן-לָךְ וְתֹאמַר  
חֲתָמְךָ וּפְתִילְךָ וּמַטֵּךְ אֲשֶׁר בְּיָדְךָ וַיִּתֶּן-לָהּ  
וַיָּבֹא אֵלֶיהָ וַתְּהַר לוֹ:

He said, "What pledge shall I give you?" She replied, "Your signet and your cord, and your staff that is in your hand." So he gave them to her, and went in to her, and she conceived by him.

**Gen 38:21**

וַיִּשְׁאַל אֶת-אֲנָשֵׁי מְקוֹמָהּ לֵאמֹר אֵינָה הַקְּדֻשָּׁה  
הוּא בְּעֵינֵינוּ עַל-הַדֶּרֶךְ וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֹא-הָיְתָה בָּזֶה  
קְדֻשָּׁה:

And he asked the men of the place, "Where is the harlot who was at Enaim by the wayside?" And they said, "No harlot has been here."

**Gen 39:9**

אֵינְנוּ גָדוֹל בְּבֵית הַזֶּה מִמֶּנִּי וְלֹא-חָשָׁךְ  
מִמֶּנִּי מֵאוֹמָה כִּי אִם-אוֹתָךְ בְּאֶשֶׁר אַתָּה-אֹשֶׁתוֹ  
וְאִיךָ אֲעֲשֶׂה הַרְעָה הַגְּדֹלָה הַזֹּאת וְחָטָאתִי  
לֵאלֹהִים:

"He is not greater in this house than I am; nor has he kept back anything from me except yourself, because you are his wife; how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

**Gen 40:7**

וַיִּשְׁאַל אֶת-סֹרִיסֵי פַרְעֹה אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ בַּמִּשְׁמֶר  
בֵּית אֲדֹנָיו לֵאמֹר מָדוּעַ פְּנֵיכֶם רָעִים הַיּוֹם:

So he asked Pharaoh's officers who were with him in custody in his master's house, "Why are your faces downcast today?"

**Gen 40:8**

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו חֲלוֹם חֲלַמְנוּ וּפְתָר אֵין אִתּוֹ  
וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם יוֹסֵף הֲלוֹא לֵאלֹהִים פְּתָרָנִים  
סָפְרוּ-נָא לִי:

They said to him, "We have had dreams, and there is no one to interpret them." And Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell them to me, I pray you."

**Gen 41:38**

וַיֹּאמֶר פַּרְעֹה אֶל-עֲבָדָיו הֲנִמְצָא כָּזֶה אִישׁ  
אֲשֶׁר רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים בּוֹ:

And Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find such a man as this, in whom is the Spirit of God?"

### **Gen 42:1**

וַיֵּרָא יַעֲקֹב כִּי יֵשׁ-שֹׁבֵר בְּמִצְרַיִם וַיֹּאמֶר  
יַעֲקֹב לְבָנָיו לָמָּה תִּתְרָאוּ:

When Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons, "Why do you look at one another?"

### **Gen 42:7**

וַיֵּרָא יוֹסֵף אֶת-אֶחָיו וַיִּכְרֶם וַיַּתְנִיחַ אֲלֵיהֶם  
וַיְדַבֵּר אִתָּם קָשׁוֹת וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם מֵאֵין בָּאתֶם  
וַיֹּאמְרוּ מִאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן לְשׁוּבַר-אֲכָל:

Joseph saw his brothers, and knew them, but he treated them like strangers and spoke roughly to them. "Where do you come from?" he said. They said, "From the land of Canaan, to buy food."

### **Gen 42:22**

וַיַּעַן רְאוּבֵן אֶתֶם לֵאמֹר הֲלוֹא אָמַרְתִּי אֲלֵיכֶם  
לֵאמֹר אַל-תַּחֲטְאוּ בִּילֵד וְלֹא שְׁמַעְתֶּם וְגַם-דָּמוֹ  
הִנֵּה נִדְרָשׁ:

And Reuben answered them, "Did I not tell you not to sin against the lad? But you would not listen. So now there comes a reckoning for his blood."

### **Gen 42:28**

וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-אֶחָיו הוֹשֵׁב בְּסַפִּי וְגַם הִנֵּה בְּאִמְתַּחַתִּי  
וַיֵּצֵא לָבָם וַיַּחֲרִדוּ אִישׁ אֶל-אֶחָיו לֵאמֹר מַה-זֹּאת  
עָשָׂה אֱלֹהִים לָנוּ:

And he said to his brothers, "My money has been put back; here it is in the mouth of my sack!" At this their hearts failed them, and they turned trembling to one another, saying, "What is this that God has done to us?"

### **Gen 43:6**

וַיֹּאמֶר יִשְׂרָאֵל לָמָּה הִרְעַתֶּם לִי לְהַגִּיד לְאִישׁ  
הָעוֹד לָכֶם אֶחָ:

Israel said, "Why did you treat me so ill as to tell the man that you had another brother?"

### **Gen 43:7**

וַיֹּאמְרוּ שְׂאוֹל שְׂאוֹל-הָאִישׁ לָנוּ וְלְמוֹלְדֹתֵנוּ  
לֵאמֹר הָעוֹד אֲבִיכֶם חַי הֲיֵשׁ לָכֶם אֶחָ וְנִגְדַּל-לוֹ  
עַל-פִּי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה הִידוּעַ נִדַּע כִּי יֹאמֶר  
הוֹרִידוּ אֶת-אֲחֵיכֶם:

They replied, "The man questioned us carefully about ourselves and our kindred, saying, 'Is your father still alive? Have you another brother?' What we told him was in answer to these questions; could we in any way know that he would say, Bring your brother down?"

**Gen 43:27**

וַיִּשְׁאַל לָהֶם לְשָׁלוֹם וַיֹּאמֶר הַשָּׁלוֹם אֲבִיכֶם  
הַזֶּקֶן אֲשֶׁר אָמַרְתֶּם הָעוֹדְנֹו חַיִּי

*And he inquired about their welfare, and said, "Is your father well, the old man of whom you spoke? Is he still alive?"*

**Gen 43:29**

וַיִּשָּׂא עֵינָיו וַיֵּרָא אֶת־בְּנֵימִין אָחִיו בֶּן־אָמֹו  
וַיֹּאמֶר הֲזֶה אַחִיכֶם הַקָּטָן אֲשֶׁר אָמַרְתֶּם  
אֵלַי וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יַחַנֵּן בְּנִי

*And he lifted up his eyes, and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, "Is this your youngest brother, of whom you spoke to me? God be gracious to you, my son!"*

**Gen 44:4**

הֵם יָצְאוּ אֶת־הָעִיר לֹא הִרְחִיקוּ וַיּוֹסֶף אָמַר  
לְאֲשֶׁר עַל־בֵּיתוֹ קוֹם רֹדֵף אַחֲרֵי הָאֲנָשִׁים  
וְהִשְׁגֶּתֶם וְאָמַרְתֶּם אֱלֹהִים לָמָּה שָׁלַמְתֶּם רָעָה  
תַּחַת טוֹבָה:

*When they had gone but a short distance from the city, Joseph said to his steward, "Up, follow after the men; and when you overtake them, say to them, Why have you returned evil for good? [Why have you stolen my silver cup?]"<sup>29</sup>*

**Gen 44:5**

הֲלוֹא זֶה אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁתֶּה אֲדֹנִי בּוֹ וְהוּא נֹחֵשׁ  
יִנְחֹשׁ בּוֹ הִרְעַתֶּם אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתֶם:

*"Is it not from this that my lord drinks, and by this that he divines? You have done wrong in so doing."*

**Gen 44:7**

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו לָמָּה יְדַבֵּר אֲדֹנִי בְּדִבְרִים  
הָאֵלֶּה חֲלִילָה לַעֲבָדֶיךָ מַעֲשׂוֹת בְּדַבֵּר הַזֶּה:

*They said to him, "Why does my lord speak such words as these? Far be it from your servants that they should do such a thing!"*

**Gen 44:8**

הֵן כֶּסֶף אֲשֶׁר מָצְאָנוּ בְּפִי אִמְתַּחֲתֵינוּ הֵשִׁיבָנוּ  
אֵלֶיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וְאֵיךְ נִגְנֹב מִבֵּית אֲדֹנֶיךָ  
כֶּסֶף אוֹ זָהָב:

*"Behold, the money which we found in the mouth of our sacks, we brought back to you from the land of Canaan; how then should we steal silver or gold from your lord's house?"*

<sup>29</sup> This sentence does not appear in the text of BHS.

**Gen 44:15**

וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם יוֹסֵף מַה־הַמַּעֲשֶׂה הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתֶם  
הֲלוֹא יָדַעְתֶּם כִּי־נֹחֵשׁ יִנְחֹשׁ אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר כְּמִנִּי:

Joseph said to them, "What deed is this that you have done? Do you not know that such a man as I can indeed divine?"

**Gen 44:16**

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוּדָה מַה־נֹּאמַר לְאֲדֹנָי מַה־נִּדְבָר וּמַה־נִּצְטָדֵק  
הָאֱלֹהִים מָצָא אֶת־עֹוֹן עַבְדֶּיךָ הִנֵּנוּ עֹבְדִים  
לְאֲדֹנָי גַּם־אֲנַחְנוּ גַּם אֲשֶׁר־נִמְצָא הַגְּבִיעַ  
בְּיָדוֹ:

And Judah said, "What shall we say to my lord? What shall we speak? Or how can we clear ourselves? God has found out the guilt of your servants; behold, we are my lord's slaves, both we and he also in whose hand the cup has been found."

**Gen 44:19**

אֲדֹנָי שָׁאַל אֶת־עַבְדָּיו לֵאמֹר הֲיֵשׁ־לָכֶם אָב אוֹ־אָח:

"My lord asked his servants, saying, Have you a father, or a brother?"

**Gen 44:34**

כִּי־אֵיךְ אֶעֱלֶה אֶל־אָבִי וְהִנֵּעַר אֵינֶנּוּ אִתִּי  
פֶּן אֲרָאָה כְּרָע אֲשֶׁר יִמָּצָא אֶת־אָבִי:

"For how can I go back to my father if the lad is not with me? I fear to see the evil that would come upon my father."

**Gen 45:3**

וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף אֶל־אָחָיו אֲנִי יוֹסֵף הָעוֹד אָבִי  
חַי וְלֹא־יָכְלוּ אָחָיו לַעֲנוֹת אוֹתוֹ כִּי נִבְהָלוּ  
מִפְּנָיו:

And Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph; is my father still alive?" But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed at his presence.

**Gen 46:33**

וְהָיָה כִּי־יִקְרָא לָכֶם פַּרְעֹה וְאָמַר מַה־מַּעֲשִׂיכֶם:

"When Pharaoh calls you, and says, What is your occupation?"

**Gen 47:3**

וַיֹּאמֶר פַּרְעֹה אֶל־אָחָיו מַה־מַּעֲשִׂיכֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ  
אֶל־פַּרְעֹה רֹעֵה צֹאן עַבְדֶּיךָ גַּם־אֲנַחְנוּ גַּם־אֲבוֹתֵינוּ:

Pharaoh said to his brothers, "What is your occupation?" And they said to Pharaoh, "Your servants are shepherds, as our fathers were."

**Gen 47:8**

וַיֹּאמֶר פַּרְעֹה אֶל-יַעֲקֹב כַּמָּה יְמֵי שְׁנֵי חַיֶּיךָ:

*And Pharaoh said to Jacob, "How many are the days of the years of your life?"*

**Gen 47:15**

וַיְהִי כִּשְׁכֹּסֵי מִצְרַיִם וּמִצְרַיִם בָּנִעַן  
וַיָּבֹאוּ כָּל-מִצְרַיִם אֶל-יוֹסֵף לֵאמֹר הִכָּה-לָנוּ  
לֶחֶם וְלֵמָּה נָמוּת נִגְדֶּךָ כִּי אָפַס בָּסֹף:

*And when the money was all spent in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came to Joseph, and said, "Give us food; why should we die before your eyes? For our money is gone."*

**Gen 47:19**

לָמָּה נָמוּת לְעֵינֶיךָ גַּם-אֲנַחְנוּ גַּם אֲדָמָתֵנוּ  
קִנְיָה-אֲתָנוּ וְאֶת-אֲדָמָתֵנוּ בְּלֶחֶם וְנִחְיָה אֲנַחְנוּ  
וְאֲדָמָתֵנוּ עֲבָדִים לַפַּרְעֹה וְתוֹ-זֶרַע וְנִחְיָה  
וְלֹא נָמוּת וְהָאֲדָמָה לֹא תִשָּׁם:

*"Why should we die before your eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and our land for food, and we with our land will be slaves to Pharaoh; and give us seed, that we may live, and not die, and that the land may not be desolate."*

**Gen 48:8**

וַיֵּרָא יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת-בְּנֵי יוֹסֵף וַיֹּאמֶר מִי-אֵלֶּה:

*When Israel saw Joseph's sons, he said, "Who are these?"*

**Gen 49:9**

גֹּדֵר אַרְיֵה יְהוּדָה מִטְרֹף בְּנֵי עֲלִית בָּרַע  
רָבֵץ בְּאַרְיֵה וּכְלָבִיא מִי יְקִימֵנוּ:

*"Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as a lioness; who dares rouse him up?"*

**Gen 50:19**

וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם יוֹסֵף אֶל-תִּירָאוּ כִּי הִתַּחַת אֱלֹהִים  
אָנִי:

*But Joseph said to them, "Fear not, for am I in the place of God?"*



Table 4 - Interrogatives in the Joseph narrative - Genesis 37-50

Pericope	Text	Speech Type		Hebrew verbs in the frame	English verbs in the frame	Hebrew Markers
37:5-11	37:8	Direct - choral <sup>30</sup>	S <sup>31</sup>	וַיֹּאמְרוּ	they said	אֵם/הֶמְלִךְ <sup>32</sup>
	37:10	Direct	M	וַיִּגְעַר / וַיֹּאמֶר	rebuked/said	הַבּוֹא/מָה
37:12-17	37:13	Direct	S	וַיֹּאמֶר	he said	הָלוֹא
	37:15	Direct	l	לֵאמֹר / וַיִּשְׁאַלְהוּ	asked/saying	מָה־
	37:16	Direct	S	וַיֹּאמֶר	he said	אִיפֹה
37:23-30	37:26	Direct	S	וַיֹּאמֶר	he said	מָה־
	37:30	Direct	S	וַיֹּאמֶר	he said	אָנֹה
37:31-33	37:32	Direct - choral	S	וַיֹּאמְרוּ	they said	הַכֶּתֶנֶת
38:15-23	38:16	Direct	S	וַתֹּאמֶר	she said	מָה־
	38:17	Direct	S	וַתֹּאמֶר	she said	Unmarked
	38:18	Direct	S	וַיֹּאמֶר	he said	מָה
	38:21	Direct	S	וַיִּשְׁאַל	he asked	אֵיךְ
39:7-10	39:9	Direct	M	וַיִּמָּאֵן / וַיֹּאמֶר	refused/said	וְאֵיךְ
40:7-9	40:7	Direct	l	לֵאמֹר / וַיִּשְׁאַל	asked/saying	מִדּוּעַ
	40:8	Direct	S	וַיֹּאמֶר	he said	הָלוֹא
41:37-41	41:38	Direct	S	וַיֹּאמֶר	said	הַנִּמְצָא
42:1-17	42:1	Direct	S	וַיֹּאמֶר	said	לְמָה
	42:7	Direct	M	וַיִּדְבֹּר / וַיֹּאמֶר קָשׁוֹת	spoke roughly - said	מֵאֵין
42:21-24	42:22	Direct	l	לֵאמֹר / וַיַּעַן	answered/saying	הָלוֹא
42:27-28	42:28	Direct	l	לֵאמֹר / וַיִּתְרַדּוּ	turned trembling /saying	מָה־
43:1-7	43:6	Direct	S	וַיֹּאמֶר	said	לְמָה
	43:7	Direct - choral	S	וַיֹּאמְרוּ	said	הַיְדוּעַ/הַיֵּשׁ/הָעוֹד
43:26-34	43:27	Direct	M	וַיֹּאמֶר / וַיִּשְׁאַל	asked/said	הָעוֹדְנוּ/הַשְּׁלוֹם
	43:29	Direct	S	וַיֹּאמֶר	said	הִזֶּה
44:3-10	44:4	Direct	S	וַאֲמַרְתָּ	say	לְמָה
	44:5	Direct	S	וַאֲמַרְתָּ	say	הָלוֹא
	44:7	Direct - choral	S	וַיֹּאמְרוּ	said	לְמָה
	44:8	Direct - choral	S	וַיֹּאמְרוּ	said	וְאֵיךְ
44:14-34	44:15	Direct	S	וַיֹּאמֶר	said	הָלוֹא/מָה־
	44:16	Direct	S	וַיֹּאמֶר	said	וּמָה־/מָה־/מָה־
	44:19	Direct	l	לֵאמֹר / שָׁאַל	asked/saying	הַיֵּשׁ־
	44:34	Direct	S	וַיֹּאמֶר		כִּי־אֵיךְ
45:1-3	45:3	Direct	S	וַיֹּאמֶר	said	הָעוֹד
47:1-10	46:33	Direct	S			מָה־
	47:3	Direct	S	וַיֹּאמֶר	said	מָה־
	47:8	Direct	S	וַיֹּאמֶר	said	בְּמָה
47:13-21	47:15	Direct - choral	l	לֵאמֹר / וַיָּבֹאוּ	came/saying	וְלְמָה
	47:19	Direct - choral	S	וַיֹּאמְרוּ	said	לְמָה
48:8-9	48:8	Direct	S	וַיֹּאמֶר	said	מִי־
49:1-10	49:9	Direct	M	וַיִּקְרָא / וַיֹּאמֶר	called/said	מִי
50:15-21	50:19	Direct	S	וַיֹּאמֶר	said	הַתַּחַת

<sup>30</sup> Choral speech is an instance in interactive reported speech that is impossible in real life, "which depicts a group speaking in unison" (Miller, 1992:37).

<sup>31</sup> S= Single verb fr.; M= Multiple verb fr.; l= *lē'môr* fr. For the definition of the frames see footnote 41 on page 73.

<sup>32</sup> The ["] means that the prefix is attached to another lexical item.



Table 5 - Distribution of interrogative markers in the Joseph Narrative

Question Marker	Number of times	Form in the text	Reference
ה	13	ה / ה	37:8, 10, 32; 41:38; 43:7(3), 27(2), 29; 44:19; 45:3 50:19
מה	12	מה / מה	37:10, 15, 26, 38:16, 18, 42:28; 44:15, 16(3), 46:33; 47:3
למה	6	למה / למה	42:1; 43:6; 44:4, 7; 47:15, 19
הלוא	5	הלוא	37:13; 40:8; 42:22; 44:5, 15
איך	3	כִּי-אֵיךְ / וְאֵיךְ	39:9; 44:8, 34
מי	2	מי / מי	48:8; 49:9
אן	1	אנה	37:30
איה	1		38:21
מדוע	1		40:7
מאין	1		42:7
כמה	1		47:8
Alleged Unmarked Question	1		38:17

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **SPEECH ACT AS AN APPROACH TO DISCOURSE**

#### ***THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK***

In the previous chapter we analysed what some grammars following a traditional analysis of language have to offer in the area of the description of interrogatives and questions. We found that they describe Biblical Hebrew interrogatives satisfactorily to a certain extent. However, they fall short in explaining many of their features in the area where the fields of syntax and semantics/pragmatics meet. Thus, the description of interrogatives in Biblical Hebrew exclusively in terms of words and sentences is not complete and clear enough (see Van der Merwe 1994:14).

In view of that, we propose to analyse interrogatives in Biblical Hebrew in a framework that allows one to study them beyond the sentence boundaries. It is part of our hypothesis that a pragmatic approach to the description of interrogatives and questions in Biblical Hebrew will yield better results than those achieved by a traditional approach. We basically mean by pragmatics “the study of the conditions of human language uses as these are determined by the context of society” (Mey 1993:42). Mey points out that by “context of society” he means “a context which is primarily determined by society’s institutions” (societal context). The context created in interaction itself Mey calls a “social context.”

As an instrument of analysis we chose speech act theory because it allows one to deal with both contexts, societal and social (although speech act theory was initially developed as a means of analysing isolated utterances). The advantage we find in the use of speech act theory as an instrument of analysis is that it provides the researcher with a set of criteria by which it is possible to identify the function(s) of different speech acts. These criteria are based on both contexts, social and societal,

as defined by Mey. Observing the work of Schiffrin (1994) one can see that her description provides a good starting point for understanding questions in English from a pragmatic point of view. She merges the principles of Austin and Searle in the analysis of discourse. Schiffrin (1994:39, 41) understands discourse as “utterances”. She justifies her definition as follows:

This view captures the idea that discourse is “above” (larger than) other units of language; however, by saying that utterance (rather than sentence) is the smaller unit of which discourse is comprised, we can suggest that discourse arises not as a collection of decontextualised units of language use ... I will view utterances as units of language production (whether spoken or written) that are inherently contextualised.

An attempt similar to that of Schiffrin is what we propose in our work, viz. to apply speech act theory to discourse, thus, the title of this Chapter, “Speech Act as an Approach to Discourse.” More specifically, we attempt to apply speech act theory to units larger than the sentence by analysing speech act sequences.

In order to apply speech act theory we briefly describe it and point out its positive aspects for the purpose we intend to accomplish. First we deal with Austin’s and Searle’s works because they are basic to the theory (our description relies heavily on the description by Schiffrin, 1994). Second, we verify the further developments of the theory and then present the way some scholars have proposed to apply the theory to biblical studies. Finally we briefly describe the approach used by Schiffrin, which we use as a model to apply speech act theory to the sample text.

## **J. L. AUSTIN**

Speech Act Theory has its origins in the work of the philosopher of language J. L. Austin in the 1950s in a series of lectures that appeared later as a book – *How to Do*

*Things With Words* (1962). John Searle, a former student of Austin, further developed the theory after Austin's death in 1960 (Searle 1969). Austin's basic perception is that some utterances look like statements at first sight (he calls them masqueraders - 1962:4) but do not have an actual "truth value." He says about these kind of utterances that "they do not 'describe' or 'report' or 'constate' anything at all, are not 'true or false'; and the uttering of a sentence is, or is part of, the doing of an action, which again would not *normally* be described as saying something." Austin calls these utterances *performatives* (1962:6) in contrast to *constatives*. He gives four basic examples of performatives:

"I do (take this woman to be my lawful wedded wife)" – as uttered in the course of the marriage ceremony.

"I name this ship the *Queen Elizabeth*"- as uttered when smashing the bottle against the stem.

"I give and bequeath my watch to my brother"- as occurring in a will.

"I bet you it will rain tomorrow."

These sentences do not describe something or the doing of something but they do something. Note that they all have in common a verb in the first person singular present indicative active. Although they may inform someone of something, they are the way someone performs an action.<sup>33</sup> To say "I do" in the appropriate context of marriage is not to convey information about marriage, but to be "indulging in it", and naming a ship is to say "I name it" (Austin 1962:6). The verbs used in the utterances are used to perform an action. In Austin's words "It indicates that the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action" (1962:6). However, for these performatives to be effective, a set of conditions must be met. These are called the "*appropriateness conditions*". For instance, to name the ship it is essential that the

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<sup>33</sup> Stampe (1975:1-39) argues strongly against the basic hypothesis of speech act theory (the

person doing it is also the person appointed to do the action. To get married it is essential that the couple involved be not already married (in a monogamous society).

The following conditions are listed by Austin (1962:14-15):

(A.1) There must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect, that procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances and further,

(A.2) the particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked.

(B.1) The procedure must be executed by all participants both correctly and

(B.2) completely.

(C. 1) Where, as often, the procedure is designed for use by persons having certain thoughts or feelings, or for the inauguration of certain consequential conduct on the part of any participant, then a person participating in and so invoking the procedure must in fact have those thoughts or feelings, and the participants must intend so to conduct themselves, and further

(C. 2) must actually so conduct themselves subsequently.

If any of these conditions are not satisfied the speech act is "unhappy" or "infelicitous". If conditions A and B above have not been fulfilled for some reason (if the person saying "I do" in a wedding ceremony is already married) then the speech act is not achieved at all. These occurrences are called "*misfires*". If conditions C1 and C2 have not been fulfilled, then the case is that the speech act is actually achieved but under insincere conditions, and these are called "*abuses*" (when someone promises something without having the intention of keeping the promise).

Also in the core of the theory are the distinctions between *locutionary*, *illocutionary* and *perlocutionary acts*. These distinctions change the focus from the utterance to the speech situation in which the utterance is produced. An utterance that produces a speech act comprises three acts. The first (*locutionary act*) refers to the actual production of an utterance that is acceptable both grammatically and semantically. Austin's concern with the locutionary act ("saying something") is in order to make clear that his main concern is with the illocutionary act ("doing something"). The illocutionary act consists of the "issuing of an utterance with conventional communicative force achieved 'in saying'" (Schiffrin 1994:51). This communicative force achieved "*in saying something*" happens "as opposed to [the] performance of an act *of saying something*" (Austin 1962:99). Thus, in Austin's view, to perform a locutionary act is also to perform an illocutionary act. To determine what illocutionary act is performed it is necessary to ask in what way the locution is being used. Is it asking or answering a question, pronouncing a sentence or announcing a verdict? Thus, a sentence classified as a declarative (with SVO order) may have the illocutionary force of an insult ("You are stupid!"). The utterance will also have a third inferred act, the *perlocutionary act*. This act is often the "consequential effects upon the feelings, thoughts, or actions of the audience, or of the speaker, or of other persons: and it may be done with the design, intention, or purpose of producing them" (1962:101). Example (1962:101-102):

Act (A) or Locution

He said to me "Shoot her!" meaning by "shoot" shoot and referring by "her" *her*.

Act (B) or Illocution

He urged (or advised, ordered, etc.) me to shoot her.

Act (C.a) or Perlocution

He persuaded me to shoot her.

Act (C.b)

He got me to (or made me , etc.) shoot her.

In a further step the initial distinction between performative and constative utterances is dismantled by Austin, as pointed out by Schiffrin (1994:51):

Recall that constatives are declaratives whose truth could be judged; performatives are declaratives that “do” an action. By the end of the book Austin proposes instead that all utterances have qualities that were initially seen as characteristic of constatives and performatives. The focus of attention is no longer the sentences, but “the issuing of an utterance in a speech situation.”<sup>34</sup>

How does Austin dismantle this distinction? He wants to show that both types of utterances (constatives and performatives) are in truth defined by the same conditions. Remember that for the constatives the truth/falsity argument is applied (see page 50) and for performatives the felicitous/unfelicitous (happy/unhappy - see page 51) is applied. However, Austin argues that the same truth/falsity conditions applied for constatives are applicable for performatives and the other way around (the same felicitous/infelicitous conditions are applicable for constatives). Note Austin’s development of the argument (1962:45-46):

Now in general this amounted to saying ... that certain conditions have to be satisfied if the utterance is to be happy - certain things have to be so. And this, it seems clear, commits us to saying that for a certain performative utterance to be happy, certain statements have *to be true*.

Thus, if when

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<sup>34</sup> White (1988:3) says about the same subject: “With this concept the speech act is firmly connected to its social context”.

I say "I apologise," I do apologise, so that we can now say, I or he did definitely apologise, then

(1) it is true and not false that I am doing (have done) something – actually numerous things, but in particular that I am apologising (have apologised);

(2) it is true and not false that certain conditions do obtain, in particular those of the kind specified in rules A. 2 and A. 2 [see page 51];

(3) it is true and not false that certain other conditions obtain of our kind C, in particular that I am thinking something; and

(4) it is true and not false that I am committed to doing something subsequently.

While this is true for performatives one must investigate whether this is also true for the constatives. One may say that constatives must meet the conditions of felicitousness; they may "misfire" or be subject to the same kinds of "abuse" as performatives are. Austin asks "Does the notion of infelicity apply to utterances *which are statements?*" (1962:20 – italics in the original). If a statement refers to something that does not exist, let us say, "The present King of France is bald," it misfires because it does not hold for a truth condition (France does not have a king at present). It is similar to someone giving in a will something that s\he does not own. "Abuses" of sincerity also apply to constatives as when one says "The cat is on the mat" if this one person does not believe that the cat is on the mat.

Austin not only dismantles the distinction between performatives and constatives but also points out to the possibility that speech acts can be performed without specialised verbs (remember that all the initial examples have a first person present indicative active verb)<sup>35</sup>. He asks: "Is the use of the first person singular indicative

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<sup>35</sup> Austin (1962:56) argues about the misleading terminology for verbs. The normal grammatical use of 'indicative' is in the sense of 'description' which Austin's theory states is not description at all, but



active, so-called, essential to a performative utterance?" (1962:57). He not only discards that as a necessity but builds this new insight upon the difference of "explicit performatives" (performatives with a verb) and "primary performatives" (without a verb). Explicit performatives make certain characteristics in a speech situation clear as to "who" is acting and "what" the action is ("I command" refers clearly to "I" – who is acting – and the action of ordering). However in a primary performative these characteristics might not be as clear (saying "it is yours" may be taken as equivalent to either "I give it to you" or "it (already) belongs to you" - 1962:62). To solve this problem situation Austin states that (61-62)

any utterance which is in fact a performative should be reducible, or expandable, or analysable into a form with a verb in the first person singular present indicative active (grammatically) ... Thus:

"Out" is equivalent to "I declare, pronounce, give or call you out" ...

"Guilty" is equivalent to "I find, pronounce, deem you guilty."

"You are warned that the bull is dangerous" is equivalent to "I, John Jones, warn you that the bull is dangerous" or

This bull is dangerous.

(Signed) John Jones

This does not mean that all problems are solved in terms of grammatical criteria for performatives. For instance, the use of the present tense does not always convey an action happening in the time of the speaking (it may convey habitual behavior, be used as a "historic" present, etc. - p. 63-66). This means that in the outcome there are no "contextual or textual conditions that support the constative-performative distinction" (Schiffrin, 1994:53). However, despite the absence of the distinction for constative-performative utterances the performatives are still very important for Austin's theory. Thus, an act in a non-explicit utterance may be made explicit if one

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action.

uses a formula building upon a performative verb ("He did not do it" > "I state that ...").

Speech acts are ultimately contextual bound. The use of a verb (and the performance of an act) are dependent on the context where they occur. A quotation from Austin (1962:143) summarises this as follows:

Again, in the case of stating truly or falsely, just as much as in the case of advising well or badly, the intents and purposes of the utterance and its context are important; what is judged true in a school book may not be so judged in a work of historical research ... In general we may say this, with both statements (and, for example, descriptions) *and* warnings, &c., the question of whether, granting that you did warn and had the right to warn, or did advise, you were *right* to state or warn or advise, can rise - not in the sense of whether it was opportune or expedient, but whether, on the facts and your knowledge of the facts and the purposes for which you were speaking, and so on, this was the proper thing to say. (Italics in original.)

Thus we may sum up Austin's theory as follows: the uttering of sentences is usually more than just "saying" something but "doing" something; the actions performed by "saying" something are contextually bound, thus we need to focus attention in the "issuing of an utterance in a speech situation"; both "context (what makes an utterance "true" and "appropriate") and text (how what is said conveys what is done)"<sup>36</sup> are of fundamental importance in understanding a speech act; speech acts are comprised of three components – locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts – and all three are subject to the same kind of conditions and, thus, subject to failure.

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<sup>36</sup> Schiffrin 1994:51

## J. R. SEARLE

A few years after the first publication of Austin's *How to Do Things With Words* (1962) Searle published *Speech Acts* (1969) in which he further develops Austin's theory. I describe Searle work as follows: his basic hypothesis, the shared rules for the recognition of speech acts, conditions or rules for speech acts and taxonomy of speech acts.

Searle's main attempt in the book is to test his hypothesis that "speaking a language is engaging in a rule-governed form of behaviour" (1969:16). He spells out the hypothesis as follows:

Speaking a language is performing speech acts, acts such as making statements, giving commands, asking questions, making promises, and so on; and more abstractly, acts such as referring and predicating; and, secondly, that these acts are in general made possible by and are performed in accordance with certain rules for the use of linguistic elements.

From this hypothesis he goes further on to "propose a systematic framework by which to incorporate speech acts into linguistic theory" (Schiffrin 1994:54). Although he argues that "the speech act is the basic unit of communication" (1969:21) Searle does not separate speech acts from the study of language itself. Traditionally, and generally, this "basic unit" has been supposed to be the symbol, word or sentence or the token of them. However, in Searle's view, this unit is the "production or issuance of the symbol or word or sentence in the performance of the speech act" (1969:16). He argues that even if it seems that his approach is a simple study of *parole*, in Saussurian terms, it is not. It is in fact a study of *langue* because in his concept of language, a theory of language is part of a theory of action reflecting his fundamental

hypothesis that "speaking is a rule-governed form of behaviour." Thus, speech act is at the very centre of the study of language. Searle illustrates his point as follows:

A way to come to see this point is to ask oneself, what is the difference between regarding an object as an instance of linguistic communication and not so regarding it? One crucial difference is this. When I take a noise or a mark in a piece of paper to be an instance of linguistic communication, as a message, one of the things I must assume is that the noise or mark was produced by a being or beings more or less like myself and produced with certain kinds of intentions. If I regard the noise or mark as a natural phenomenon like the wind in the trees or a stain in the paper, I exclude it from the class of linguistic communication, even though the noise or mark may be indistinguishable from spoken or written words. Furthermore, not only must I assume the noise or mark to have been produced as a result of intentional behavior, but I must also assume that the intentions are of a very special kind peculiar to speech acts.<sup>37</sup>

Searle further justifies his approach arguing that there are not two distinct semantic studies (*i.e.* one that looks for the meaning of sentences and one that studies the performance of speech acts), but one only. In general, the speech act performed in the utterance of a sentence is a function of the meaning of the sentence itself (1969:18). Although a speaker may mean more than he actually says, it is possible for him to say, in principle, exactly what he means. It is, therefore, "possible for every speech act one performs or could perform to be uniquely determined by a given sentence (or set of sentences), given the assumption that the speaker is speaking literally and that the context is appropriate" (1969:18). This introduces the principle of expressibility, "what can be meant can be said" (1969:19). This principle assumes that even if there is something that cannot be said in a certain language, it is possible to expand and adapt that language to express what I mean, and if I don't know

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<sup>37</sup> See similar principles from another perspective in the section on language universals, page 9.

enough of the language to say what I mean, I can always increase my knowledge of that language. Searle points out two main consequences of this principle (1969:20-21):

(1) regarding sense and reference (Frege's theory), cases when a speaker does not say exactly what he means - the principal kinds of cases of which are nonliteralness, vagueness, ambiguity, and incompleteness - are not theoretically essential to linguistic communication.

(2) it enables us to equate rules for performing speech acts with rules for uttering certain linguistic elements, since for any possible speech act there is a possible linguistic element the meaning of which (given the context of the utterance) is sufficient to determine that its literal utterance is a performance of precisely that speech act.

Searle concludes on the topic of expressibility as follows:

The hypothesis that the speech act is the basic unit of communication, taken together with the principle of expressibility, suggests that there are a series of analytic connections between the notion of speech acts, what the speaker means, what the sentence (or other linguistic element) uttered means, what the speaker intends, what the hearer understands, and what the rules governing the linguistic elements are (1969:21).

In theory Searle's hypothesis brings together the study of language, communication, meaning and speech acts.

If "speaking a language is engaging in a rule-governed form of behaviour" or "talking is performing acts according to rules" (1969:22) then, the ability to communicate is proportional to the shared knowledge of these rules. These rules can be identified by

"relying heavily on the intuitions (and linguistic characterisations) of native speakers" (Schiffrin 1994:55) and not the description of the behaviour of a group.<sup>38</sup>

Schiffrin (1994:55) concludes: "What such intuitions can provide are "idealised models" (p.56) of the conditions that are necessary and sufficient for the utterance of a given sentence to be a successful, non-defective performance of a given act." Thus, to analyse the act of promising, Searle asks the question "What conditions are necessary and sufficient for the act of promising to have been successfully and non-defectively performed in the utterance of a given sentence?" (1969:54). To answer the question Searle states the conditions as a set of propositions. Once the conditions are established then the rules for the use of the illocutionary force indicating device can also be set. Searle illustrates the point as someone who has learned to play chess without ever having the rules for the game formulated and now wants the rules. The same applies to illocutionary acts: one learns the game of illocutionary acts, in general, without explicitly formulating its rules. To formulate them it is necessary to set first its conditions. To state the conditions and the rules Searle simply assumes the existence of grammatically well-formed sentences since his inquiry is semantic rather than syntactic (1969:56). These rules are called *constitutive* and they are of a definitional type (*X counts as Y* or *X counts as Y* in context *C*). They are different from regulative rules that "characteristically have the form or can be paraphrased in the form "Do *X*" or "If *Y* do *X*".

One should note that in Searle's conditions and rules both context and text are important. Schiffrin points out that "Like Austin, Searle classifies conditions and rules according to their necessity to the act. But in contrast to Austin, Searle classifies

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<sup>38</sup> From the beginning we pointed out the difficulties of applying such an approach to a language in which there are no native speakers. This is a problem that affects all levels of studies of Biblical Hebrew. Many of the deductions we make are based on our own reconstruction of the meaning of an expression in a particular context.

different kinds of conditions (and rules) according to what aspect of text and context is focused upon in the condition or rule" (1994:55).

Contrary to Austin, Searle does not accept the distinction between *locutionary* and *illocutionary* acts (explained above in page 52) but he still uses the both terms (see Searle 1969:23 n 1). The segments of a speech act in Searle's view (1969:23-25) are the *utterance act* (the uttering of words), the *propositional act* (referring and predicating), the *illocutionary act* (stating, questioning, commanding, promising) and the *perlocutionary act* (the consequences of illocutionary acts). Searle points out that the purpose of abstracting each of these kinds is that the "identity criteria" are different in each case. For instance, the same propositional acts can be common to different illocutionary acts according to their contexts.

Basic to the concept of speech acts is the idea of "doing something" with words. This "doing" is constituted in terms of rules (see Searle's basic hypothesis, page 57), and it is also intentional (see quotation on page 58). With these factors in mind we may list the conditions presented by Searle for illocutionary acts as they are summarised by Schiffrin (1994:56).

First, we have the **propositional content** conditions or rules: they concern reference and predication (the propositional act) and focus upon the textual content (Searle 1969:57-58). Second, we have the **preparatory conditions** or rules. They are related to background conditions and knowledge of both the speaker and hearer prior to the performance of the act (58-60). Third, we have the **sincerity conditions** or rules which are related to the speaker's psychological state as it is expressed in the performance of an illocutionary act (60). Fourth, we have the **essential condition** or rule which is the "point" of the act or how it "count as", the illocutionary point (60). As the name says, this last rule is essential for the performance of a certain speech act while the others are more or less fundamental for the non-

defective performance of it. See Table 7 - Types of illocutionary act (page 72) for the rules on requesting, asserting, questioning, thanking (for), advising, warning, greeting and congratulating.

These types of illocutionary acts mentioned above must fit into a larger taxonomy that could be applied to all kinds illocutionary acts. In his *How To Do Things With Words* Austin proposed five classes of speech acts: verdictives, exercitives, commissives, behabitives and expositives (1962:150). Searle, however, disagrees with Austin's taxonomic principles stating that his categories are not based on consistent principles (1979:8-12). Searle (1979:2-8) points out 12 dimensions in terms of which he thinks illocutionary acts differ from one another.

1. *Differences in the point (or purpose) of the (type of) act.* These refer to the essential conditions, which Searle believes form the best basis for a taxonomy. The point or purpose of an order is an attempt to get the hearer to do something. The point or purpose of commissives is that they commit the speaker to a future act. This point or purpose of an illocution is named the *illocutionary act*. See essential conditions in Table 7 - Types of illocutionary act (examples of types of illocutionary acts from Searle 1969:66-67).

2. *Differences in the direction of fit between words and the world.* "Some illocutions have as part of their illocutionary point to get the words (more strictly, their propositional content) to match the world, others to get the world to match the words" (p. 3). The first case, *word-to-world* fit, includes speech acts like statements, descriptions, assertions and explanations. The words are used to describe, explain, etc., a "pre-existing" world. This "world" is not created by the words. In the second case, *world-to-words* fit, includes requests, commands, vows and promises. The speaker creates a world from the words (e.g., in a promise, the speaker undertakes to create a world represented in the words).



3. *Differences in expressed psychological states.* "In general, in the performance of any illocutionary act with a propositional content, the speaker expresses some attitude, state, etc., to that propositional content" (1979:4). This attitude may be belief, intention, want or desire or pleasure. Thus, if someone asserts something, his attitude towards the propositional content of the assertion is belief. Even if the assertion is insincere the belief is expressed in the performance of the speech act. Searle (1979:4) explains that "This fact is marked linguistically by the fact that it is linguistically unacceptable (though not self-contradictory) to conjoin the explicit performative verb with the denial of the expressed psychological state. Thus one cannot say "I state that *p* but I do not believe that *p*.""

4. *Differences in the force or strength with which the illocutionary point is presented.* Although two or more speech acts may have the same illocutionary point they may be presented with different strength, e.g., "I suggest we go to the movies" and "I insist we go to the movies".

5. *Differences in the status or position of the speaker and hearer as these bear on the illocutionary force of the utterance.* The status of the speaker and hearer is of fundamental importance to understand the preparatory conditions to identify a certain speech act. Thus, the position of speaker and hearer must be noted (e.g., if the general asks the private to clean up the room, that is in all likelihood a command or an order) to be able to distinguish between a simple request and an order.

6. *Differences in the way the utterances relate to the interests of the speaker and hearer.* This is also related to the preparatory conditions. For instance, the two pairs boasts/laments and congratulations/condolences show the differences between what is and what is not in the interests of both speaker and hearer respectively. The first pair, both assertives, are in the interest of the speaker. The second pair, both expressives are in the interest of the hearer.

7. *Differences in relations to the rest of the discourse.* The relation of a certain utterance to the rest of the discourse may be marked by performative expressions. They fill the purpose of relating the utterances to its surroundings. Searle includes expressions such as: I reply, I conclude, I deduce and I object. Also the so-called discourse markers like “however”, “moreover” and “therefore” may perform these discourse relating functions.

8. *Difference in propositional content that are determined by illocutionary force indicating devices.* “The differences, for example, between a report and a prediction involve the fact that a prediction must be about the future whereas a report can be about the past or present” (1979:6).

9. *Differences between those acts that must be speech acts, and those that can be, but need not be performed as speech acts.* One can estimate, conclude or classify something without saying anything. However, it is possible to perform speech acts in these terms like “I conclude”, “I estimate, etc. But in order to “conclude”, “estimate” it is not necessary to say anything at all.

10. *Differences between those acts that require extra-linguistic institutions for their performance and those that do not.* If one is to bless, excommunicate, baptise, it is necessary to have a position within an extra-linguistic institution. This is to be considered differently from the position of speaker and hearer mentioned in rule 5 above. One may give an order without being part of an extra-linguistic institution, let us say, a robber’s order to the victims to raise their hands.

11. *Differences between those acts where the corresponding illocutionary verb has a performative use and those where it does not.* “Not all illocutionary verbs have performative verbs” (1979:7). For instance, one cannot boast by saying “I hereby boast.”

12. *Differences in the style of performance of the illocutionary act.* Two different illocutionary acts may have the same illocutionary point and propositional content and yet be different from each other as a result of style. Consider for instance, announcing that “My wife is pregnant” and confiding that “My wife is pregnant”.

With these principles in mind Searle proposes a basic taxonomy divided into five classes: *Assertives* (Searle previously called them *Representatives* (Searle 1976:10), *Directives*, *Commissives*, *Expressives* and *Declarations*. These five categories are differentiated from each other by the first three principles (1-3) stated above and the different speech acts within these categories are differentiated by the remaining principles (4 to 12).

In the following chapters we will be concerned with the category called *directives* since questions belong to it. It is worthwhile to quote Searle’s general description of this category’s features (1979:13-14) for future reference while the specific rules for questions are exemplified in Table 7.

The illocutionary point of these consists in the fact that they are attempts (of varying degrees, and hence, more precisely, they are determinates of the determinable which includes attempting) by the speaker to get the hearer to do something. They may be very modest “attempts” as when I invite you to do it or suggest that you do it, or they may be very fierce attempts as when I insist that you do it... The direction of fit is word-to-worlds and the sincerity conditions is want (or wish or desire). The propositional content is always that the hearer *H* does some future action *A*. Verbs denoting members of this class are, *ask, order, command, request, beg, plead, pray, entreat*, and also *invite, permit, and advise* ... Questions are a subclass of directives, since they are attempts by *S* to get *H* to answer, i.e., to perform a speech act.

Searle dedicates one chapter of his *Expression and Meaning* (1979) to explain his theory of speech acts in relation to indirect speech acts. The most fundamental point of the explanation is the fact that it is possible to perform more than one speech act with an utterance and the interpretation of the different speech acts is dependent on the context of the utterance. Searle's (1979:32) hypothesis is that "In indirect speech acts the speaker communicates to the hearer more than he actually says by way of relying on their mutually shared background information, both linguistic and non-linguistic, together with the general powers of rationality and inference on the part of the hearer." Thus, there is a primary speech act which is "performed by the performance of another act (a 'literal' act)" (Schiffrin 1994:59). The ability of a hearer to interpret these acts is due to his knowledge of co-operative principles of communication and knowledge of the speech acts themselves. The co-operative principles mentioned above are stated mainly in the theory of communication exposed by Grice. See table below (from Pratt 1977:130).

*Table 6 - Grice's co-operative principle*

"Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged."

I. Maxims of Quantity

1. "Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of your exchange)."
2. "Do not make your contribution more informative than is required."

II. Maxims of Quality

Supermaxim: "Make your contribution one that is true."

Maxims

1. "Do not say what you believe to be false."
2. "Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence."

III. Maxim of Relation

1. "Be relevant."

IV. Maxims of Manner

Supermaxim: "Be perspicuous."

Maxims

1. "Avoid obscurity of expression."
2. "Avoid ambiguity."
3. "Be brief."
4. "Be orderly."

Schiffirin uses two sentences to illustrate the point: "I hope you will write a letter of recommendation for me" and "Would you be able to write a letter of recommendation for me?" The two sentences are promptly recognised and understood as directives because that is their primary act. However, the first one is literally a statement and the second one is literally a question (as we saw above, questions are classified in the directives class, but not statements). What is it that allows one to understand the utterances as directives? The fact that the "literal" speech act that they perform is based upon a condition that allows directives to be performed. Thus, the first one holds to a sincerity condition for requests (*S* wants *H* to do *A*) while the second has a preparatory condition of the form "*H* is able to perform *A*." In conclusion, "An utterance can do more than one thing at a time" (Schiffirin 1994:60) when one act is performed by the way of another. This, for instance, is a way of explaining so-called rhetorical questions.

Searle's theory may be summarised as follows: speaking a language is performing speech acts. The speech acts performed are to be recognised by speakers of a language according to rules that are shared by the speakers in the context which these acts are performed. Each speech act consists of four basic segments, viz. utterance, propositional, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. Four kinds of conditions or rules allow a speaker to understand a certain speech act: propositional content, preparatory conditions, sincerity conditions and essential conditions. According to these conditions it is then possible to establish a large taxonomy that can be applied to all kinds of illocutionary acts. It is also possible to perform indirect speech acts.

## DEVELOPMENTS

Before moving to the application of the theory it is important to take a look at further developments of the theory and especially how some biblical scholars approach speech acts. White (1988b) in his article "Speech Act Theory and Literary Criticism" characterises three approaches to speech act theory according to the emphasis of each, *i.e.* right, left and centre.

First there is the "right" approach. This approach is represented by those linguists that keep the theory of speech acts within the scope of Austin's and Searle's works and conclusions. These scholars apply speech act theory to utterances and their context. Most of them actually use fictitious data (constructed utterances and hypothetical contexts) to analyse speech acts.

White characterises the "centre" approach as the extension of the scope of speech act theory into the use of the insights of another philosopher of language, *viz.*, Paul Grice. According to this approach a larger contextual situation is to be taken into consideration and the act of writing itself is considered a "type of speech act which has significance for the whole of every literary work" (1988b:4). This approach is well represented in the work of Pratt (1977). Bach and Harnish (1979) also represent this approach.

The "left" approach emphasises the performative dimension of language itself. White himself wrote an article (1988c) in which he develops the idea of the value of speech acts theory for First Testament hermeneutics. He seeks in speech act theory a mediating position between the concepts exposed by Roland Barthes and Jaques Derrida in the speech event. The recent work by Neufeld (1994) can be also included in the this category. He states that

At the heart of this approach [speech act theory] is the insight of the rhetorical character of historiography and the view that language is a form of action and power. Discourse becomes responsible for creating reality and not merely reflecting it ... The author *stands behind* the words giving a pledge and is personally backing that he or she is prepared to undertake commitments and responsibilities that are entailed in the extra-linguistic terms by the proposition which is asserted (1994:4-5).

Neufeld also speaks of texts as “*effective acts* which change situations ...” (p. 6).

These are clear examples of the “left” approach.

In biblical scholarship the work of Eugene Botha (1991) is a good example of the “centre” position. Botha engages with the works of Austin (1962), Searle (1969, 1979) and Pratt (1977), and Leech (1983), etc. His concern is to analyse the style of John’s Gospel and particularly Chapter Four of the book as a literary work. These two approaches (centre and left) are mainly concerned with the relation author/reader, speaker/audience and the interpretation of the literary work as it is.

Since we are not concerned with the relations author/reader, speaker/audience or the interpretation of long stretches of discourse, but trying to identify a specific utterance in Biblical Hebrew, the “right” approach seems to be more appropriate for the purposes of this dissertation. Because a preliminary reading of the Joseph narrative reveal a considerable number of interrogatives it seems to be an appropriate starting point. However, it is not our intention to interpret the narrative as a whole. We are looking for better definitions for a certain kind of utterance, viz. questions in Biblical Hebrew, and not a hermeneutical tool to be applied to long stretches of discourse or narratives as a whole. It is our intention to investigate at least four aspects regarding questions in which the “right” approach may prove to be helpful: (1) verify whether what is normally identified as an interrogative sentence in Biblical Hebrew fulfils the conditions for questions according to speech acts theory;

(2) verify if unmarked sentences are used to pose questions in BH; (3) investigate the function of surface level interrogative sentences that are not questions as such according to speech act theory; (4) check whether there are correlations between the pragmatic function of questions in Biblical Hebrew and the way in which they are marked as questions.

#### **D. SCHIFFRIN**

Schiffrin's approach is unique in the sense that it applies Searle's approach to discourse analysis. Searle's work is developed mostly around single utterances and especially hypothetical ones. A few scholars tried to apply speech acts to actual utterances without, however, analysing the "sequential relationships between utterances themselves" (Schiffrin 1994:61). Considering this fact, Schiffrin (1994:61) proposes that

If we want to consider speech acts as an approach to discourse, however, we need to consider both of these issues: how speech act function contributes to sequential coherence, and how the speech act function of one utterance contributes to that of another.

In her analysis Schiffrin considers two main steps in the application of speech acts to discourse analysis: (i) how to identify an utterance as a particular speech act; (ii) how an initial speech act creates an environment in which a next speech act is (or is not) appropriate. This last step is based in the definition of discourse she uses: "discourse (by definition) is comprised of sequentially arranged units"; thus, a determinate speech act affects and creates other speech acts. According to Brennenstuhl (1988:54)

It is obvious that a speech act analyst who confines himself to the characteristics and conditions of single speech acts would have very little to contribute to a theory of spoken<sup>39</sup> discourse. What matters

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<sup>39</sup> Although Brunnenstuhl uses the word 'spoken' here, he acknowledges that the same applies to



here is the *dynamical aspect* of language. Not the speech acts units but the *speech act sequences* and their dynamical properties must be in the focus of the study of discourse.

Further details of Schiffrin's approach will be explained and developed as we apply it to our sample text in the Joseph narrative.

**Table 7 - Types of illocutionary acts**

*This table is from Searle 1969:66-67.*

Types of Rules

	Request	Assert, state (that), affirm	Question
Propositional content	Future act <i>A</i> of <i>H</i> .	Any proposition <i>p</i> .	Any proposition or propositional function.
Preparatory	1. <i>H</i> is able to do <i>A</i> . <i>S</i> believes <i>H</i> is able to do <i>A</i> . 2. It is not obvious to both <i>S</i> and <i>H</i> that <i>H</i> will do <i>A</i> in the normal course of events of his own accord.	1. <i>S</i> has evidence (reasons, etc.) for the truth of <i>p</i> . 2. It is not obvious to both <i>S</i> and <i>H</i> that <i>H</i> knows (does not need to be reminded of, etc.) <i>p</i> .	1. <i>S</i> does not know 'the answer', i.e., does not know if the proposition is true, or, in the case of the propositional function, does not know the information needed to complete the proposition truly (but see comment below). 2. It is not obvious to both <i>S</i> and <i>H</i> that <i>H</i> will provide the information at that time without being asked.
Sincerity	<i>S</i> wants <i>H</i> to do <i>A</i> .	<i>S</i> believes <i>p</i>	<i>S</i> wants this information
Essential	Counts as an attempt to get <i>H</i> to do <i>A</i> .	Counts as an undertaking to the effect that <i>p</i> represents an actual state of affairs.	Counts as an attempt to elicit this information from <i>H</i> .
Comment:	<i>Order</i> and <i>command</i> have the additional preparatory rule that <i>S</i> must be in a position of authority over <i>H</i> . <i>Command</i> probably does not have the 'pragmatic' condition requiring non-obviousness. Furthermore in both, the authority relationship infects the essential condition because the utterance counts as an attempt to get <i>H</i> to do <i>A</i> in virtue of the authority of <i>S</i> over <i>H</i> .	Unlike <i>argue</i> these do not seem to be essentially tied to attempting to convince. Thus "I am simply stating that <i>p</i> and not attempting to convince you" is acceptable, but "I am arguing that <i>p</i> and not attempting to convince you" sounds inconsistent.	There are two kinds of questions, (a) real questions, (b) exam questions. In real questions <i>S</i> wants to know (find out) the answer; in exam questions, <i>S</i> wants to know if <i>H</i> knows.

Types of Rules

	Thank (for)	Advise	Warn
Propositional content	Past act <i>A</i> done by <i>H</i> .	Future act <i>A</i> of <i>H</i> .	Future event or state, etc., <i>E</i> .
Preparatory	<i>A</i> benefits <i>S</i> and <i>S</i> believes <i>A</i> benefits <i>S</i> .	1. <i>H</i> has some reason to believe <i>A</i> will benefit <i>H</i> . 2. It is not obvious to both <i>S</i> and <i>H</i> that <i>H</i> will do <i>X</i> in the normal course of events.	1. <i>H</i> has reason to believe <i>E</i> will occur and is not in <i>H</i> 's interest. 2. It is not obvious to both <i>S</i> and <i>H</i> that <i>E</i> will occur.
Sincerity	<i>S</i> feels grateful or appreciative for <i>A</i> .	<i>S</i> believes <i>A</i> will benefit <i>H</i> .	<i>S</i> believes <i>E</i> is not in <i>H</i> 's best interest.
Essential	Counts as an expression of gratitude or appreciation.	Counts as an undertaking to the effect that <i>A</i> is in <i>H</i> 's best interest.	Counts as an undertaking to the effect that <i>E</i> is not in <i>H</i> 's best interest.
Comment:	Sincerity and essential rules overlap. Thanking is just expressing gratitude in a way that, e.g., promising is not just expressing an intention.	Contrary to what one might suppose advice is not a species of requesting. It is interesting to compare "advise" with "urge", "advocate" and "recommend". Advising you is not trying to get you to do something in the sense that requesting is. Advising is more like telling you what is best for you.	Warning is like advising, rather than requesting. It is not, I think, necessarily an attempt to get you to take evasive action. Notice that the above account is of categorical not hypothetical warnings. Most warnings are probably hypothetical: "If you do not do <i>X</i> then <i>Y</i> will occur."

Types of Rules

	Greet	Congratulate
Propositional content	None	Some event, act, etc., <i>E</i> related to <i>H</i> .
Preparatory	<i>S</i> has just encountered (or been introduced to, etc.) <i>H</i> .	<i>E</i> is in <i>H</i> 's interest and <i>S</i> believes <i>E</i> is in <i>H</i> 's interest.
Sincerity	None	<i>S</i> is pleased at <i>E</i>
Essential	Counts as courteous recognition of <i>H</i> by <i>S</i> .	Counts as an expression of pleasure at <i>E</i> . Congratulate is similar to "thank" in that it is an expression of its sincerity condition.
Comment:		

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **SAMPLE ANALYSIS**

The Joseph narrative (from now on JN) presents a considerable number of interrogatives that may be identified as such by surface level criteria (see the examples on Table 4 - Interrogatives in the Joseph narrative - Genesis 37-50 page 46). The criteria for this identification are spelled out in the chapter “What do we know about questions?” Our purpose in this section is to identify the speech acts performed by these utterance acts identified syntactically as interrogatives. Below I describe some steps that are followed to identify speech acts. Our first step is to verify whether or not these utterances in Table 4 can be identified as the speech act called QUESTION, and if not, what speech act is performed by the utterances. We will also implement the criteria set out in the previous chapter — to analyse speech acts according to the sequential relationships between utterances themselves and to identify how speech act functions contribute to sequential coherence.

To accomplish this task it is necessary to recognise the structure of the text, its pericopes and consider linguistic and contextual conditions for each of them. Each of these is important if one intends to apply speech act theory to a text instead of isolated sentences. Finding out the structure and pericopes of the narrative gives us parameters in terms of analysis (where to begin and where to end). Understanding the linguistic and contextual conditions (who speaks, to whom, in which psychological and sociological circumstances, etc.) allows one to apply speech act rules and conditions. Also very important in the application of speech acts theory to discourse<sup>40</sup> are quotative frames and metapragmatic verbs<sup>41</sup> that introduce the

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<sup>40</sup> See the definition of discourse we adopt on page 49.

utterances we intend to analyse. The frame types and metapragmatic verbs in the JN are identified in Table 4, page 46. The identification of frame types is based in Miller's (1992) work on linguistic analysis of reported speech.

It is also important to identify the broader pericope and context of the utterance which may provide an insight into the speech acts performed. This is a difficult task because, depending on the approach adopted and criteria established, scholars have diverse views about the structure of the JN.<sup>42</sup> There is, however, general agreement concerning the narrative as a whole. For instance, it is agreed that the narrative comprises of the Chapters 37 to the end of the book of Genesis. Some difficulties arise, however, as to whether Chapter 38 belongs to the narrative or not (the episode about Judah and Tamar)<sup>43</sup> as well as how the final chapters (49 and 50) fit into the narrative. The complexity of the task compels us to make a choice between the available works on the JN and commentaries on the book of Genesis. Longacre (1989) does a textlinguistic analysis of the JN and provides as a result of his work a comprehensive and detailed outline of the text of the JN (Chapters 37 to 45) which seems to fit our purposes. One advantage of using Longacre's pericopes is that he considers the multiple-level structures of the narrative and tries to make clear the distinctions between direct and indirect speech, quotation formulas and participant reference. One should note that recent scholarly publications contain a considerable number of references to Longacre's work, possible refinement and

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<sup>41</sup> Most questions in the JN occur in direct speech, or reported speech. According to Miller (1994:199) "A token of reported speech is composed of two parts: the *quotation*, which represents the original locution, and the *quotative frame*, the report which introduces the quotation." The terms 'quotative frame', 'verb frame' or 'speech frame' have the same meaning here. Note also that "In Hebrew there is no difference between the two kinds of sentence [direct and indirect questions], either as regards moods (as in Latin) or in tense or position of the words (as in English)" - GKC § 150.i n2.

<sup>42</sup> See for instance the comprehensive work of Redford (1970) on source criticism of the JN. Despite its comprehensiveness there is not a single instance where the structure of the story is outlined as it is presently found.

<sup>43</sup> Several different suggestions for the account on Chapter 38 are offered, some on narrative structure grounds (e.g. Speiser, 1962:299-300), others based on redactional and chronological grounds (e.g. Redford, 1970:16).

development of his application of tagmemics theory to biblical studies, as well as criticism of his work.<sup>44</sup>

The analysis in this chapter proceeds as follows: an introductory analysis of the first two sets of interrogatives in the JN (37:8 and 10) in which we present the reader with preliminary considerations about pericope, context, speech frames, speech act sequences (adjacency pairs) and issues regarding the traditional classification of questions (rhetorical, non rhetorical). We simply selected these two verses to begin with because they are the first ones to appear in the narrative. Considering the findings in the introductory analysis (that interrogatives are not necessarily followed by an answer and are used to perform speech acts other than questions) we divide the remaining interrogatives in our sample text in two groups: apparently unanswered interrogatives and apparently answered interrogatives in the JN (I use the term “apparently” because some interrogatives when observed in a superficial analysis are apparently unanswered, however, we demonstrate that they have actual answers that are not clear from the text surface); a last section in this chapter (Allegedly Unmarked Interrogatives) deals with Genesis 38, not because of contextual problems (it seems that the narrative in the chapter is not connected with the main narrative) but because one sentence in that chapter (38:17b) is translated as an interrogative in RSV (and other English versions) but is not marked as an interrogative in Hebrew. I use the analysis of this sentence to introduce and investigate further the matter of the allegedly unmarked questions in BH. Each of these sections above is followed by some preliminary conclusions.

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<sup>44</sup> Dawson (1994), a student of Longacre, tries to bridge the gap between linguistic studies and biblical studies and applies the principles of Longacre’s theory to other biblical passages.

## INTRODUCTORY ANALYSIS

## Genesis 37:8 and 10

*Pericope* - The first *pericope* where interrogatives occur comprises of verses 5 to 11 in Chapter 37. It includes a narrative with two sequences of reported speech, one between Joseph and his brothers and a second between Joseph and his father. The data in the first *pericope* may be divided as follows:<sup>45</sup>

Table 8 - *Pericope: Genesis 37:5 -11*

37.5 וַיַּחֲלֹם יוֹסֵף חֲלוֹם וַיַּגֵּד לְאֶתְיוֹ וַיּוֹסֶפוּ עוֹד שָׁנָא אֹתוֹ:	Narrative - text setting - introducing a dialogue
37.6 וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם שְׁמְעוּ-נָא הַחֲלוֹם הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר חֲלַמְתִּי:	Direct speech introduced by single verb frame
37.7 וַהֲנֵה אֲנַחְנוּ מְאֻלָּמִּים אֲלֵמִים בְּתוֹךְ הַשָּׂדֶה וְהֵנָּה קָמָה אֲלֵמְתִי וְגַם-נֹצֵבָה וְהֵנָּה תִּסְבִּינָה אֲלֵמְתֵיכֶם וְתִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לְאֵלֵמְתִּי:	
37.8 וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ אֶחָיו הַמִּלֵּךְ תִּמְלֹךְ עָלֵינוּ אִם-מִשׁוֹל תִּמְשַׁל בָּנוּ וַיּוֹסֶפוּ עוֹד שָׁנָא אֹתוֹ עַל-חֲלֻמְתּוֹ וְעַל-דִּבְרָיו:	Interrogative - Direct speech introduced by single verb frame - Choral speech <sup>46</sup>
37.9 וַיַּחֲלֹם עוֹד חֲלוֹם אֲחֵר וַיִּסְפֹּר אֹתוֹ לְאֶתְיוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה חֲלֻמְתִּי חֲלוֹם עוֹד וְהֵנָּה הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ וְהַיָּרֵחַ וְאַחַד עֶשֶׂר כּוֹכָבִים מִשְׁתַּחֲוִים לִּי:	Narrative text
37.10 וַיִּסְפֹּר אֶל-אָבִיו וְאֶל-אֶחָיו וַיִּגְעַר-בָּנוּ אָבִיו וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ מָה הַחֲלוֹם הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר חֲלַמְתָּ הֲבֹא נָכוֹא אֲנִי וְאַמְתָּ וְאַחֶיךָ לְהִשְׁתַּחֲוֹת לָךְ אֶרְצָה:	Narrative followed by Interrogative - Direct speech introduced by a multiple verb frame
37.11 וַיִּקְנְאוּ-בָּו אֶתְיוֹ וְאָבִיו שָׁמַר אֶת-הַדְּבָר:	Narrative text

*Setting* - Although the first question in the narrative occurs in 37:8 which belongs to the *pericope* in 37:5-11 (according to Longacre), it is in verses 2 to 5 that one can find the setting for the narrative and its main characters. We find Joseph, seventeen years old, a young lad among the brothers, sons of his father with Bilhah and Zilpah.<sup>47</sup> Other background<sup>48</sup> information was already given to the reader in previous

<sup>45</sup> In the previous chapters all examples of BH were unaccented. However, access to a new database with accents when I started this chapter allowed the texts from this chapter onward to be accented.

<sup>46</sup> Here we possibly have one member of the group expressing the idea of the whole group. See footnote 30.

<sup>47</sup> The mentioning of Bilha and Zilpah only is at first intriguing. Why the other wives are not mentioned does not have a clear explanation. See Westerman (1987:36), Skinner (1910:444), Lowenthal (1973:14), Von Rad (1970:345).



chapters of the book of Genesis. Although the JN is seen as an independent narrative by many scholars,<sup>49</sup> one that could be read and understood by itself, the previous chapters of Genesis give important information about the characters involved in it and we refer to this information as needed in the development of the arguments that follows. The characters involved in the first pericope are Joseph, his brothers<sup>50</sup> and his father.<sup>51</sup> The text presents to the readers an environment of crisis and conflict among Joseph (the youngest) and his brothers as well as Joseph's privileged position in the eyes of his father.

*Syntax* - We know from the previous chapters that interrogative sentences in BH have certain syntactic characteristics that identify them as such. For instance, the sentences in verse 8 and 10 above can be identified as interrogatives through their surface level characteristics, introduced by interrogative particles such as **ה** / **אם** (see page 16) and question words such as **מה** (see page 17). The interrogative in verse 8 (**הַמֶּלֶךְ תִּמְלֹךְ עָלֵינוּ אִם-מְשׁוֹל תִּמְשָׁל בָּנוּ**) --"Are you indeed to reign over us? Or are you indeed to have dominion over us?" is usually named a disjunctive, alternative or double question. Some grammarians pointed out that the use of such interrogatives is a matter of mere style (Joüon-Muraoka, § 161.e). The role of the particle **אם**, however, is not clear. When the particle is preceded by **ו** it normally indicates a co-ordinated sentence where the **אם** is parallel to the interrogative particle **ה**, thus, no indication of a real disjunction in the interrogative is involved (see Andersen 1974:147). It seems that a co-ordination, indicating a double interrogative,

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<sup>48</sup> I am using the term here in a situational-context perspective and not in a textlinguistic manner as defined in tagmemics (e.g. Andersen 1974).

<sup>49</sup> See Westerman (1987:34).

<sup>50</sup> Most commentators will make a disjunction between the "sons of Bilha and Zilpah" mentioned in verse 2 and the brothers mentioned from verse 4 on.

<sup>51</sup> The text mention Joseph's mother; however, she is not a character in the story. The actual reference cannot be to Joseph's natural mother, Rachel, whose death is mentioned in 35:18. For further

makes more sense since the sentences have a parallel meaning.<sup>52</sup> According to Redford (1970:39) the אם clause is “an admirable vehicle for conditions. Logically, a conditional sentence makes out that two events are parallel to the degree that they are inevitable concomitants under any circumstances.” Verse 10 presents two interrogatives, the first introduced by the question word *מה החלום הזה אשר* (מה) – “What is this dream that you have dreamed?”, and the second introduced by the particle *ה* (ה) – “Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves to the ground before you?”. In this case the syntax is clear regarding the boundaries of each interrogative sentence. In both verses (8 and 10) the interrogatives use a well attested sequence of infinitive absolute plus imperfect, indicating an intensive meaning.<sup>53</sup>

*Speech Act* - We are, however, looking for ways to identify a certain utterance as a particular speech act. To discover that, we need to apply Searle's rules for questions as outlined in the table - Types of illocutionary act (page 72). For the sake of fluency we repeat the rules for questions here:

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reference see Coats 1976:14.

<sup>52</sup> In his study Held (1969:72) calls these questions ‘double rhetorical question’ and quotes a number of examples.

<sup>53</sup> According to Van der Merwe *et al.* (§ 20.2.1) “This construction usually intensifies the verbal idea. In this way BH speakers/narrators **express their conviction of the verity of their statements regarding an action**. When a speaker has used this construction, a listener would not be able to claim that the speaker had not expressed himself/herself clearly enough at a later date.” The use of the infinitive absolute plus imperfect in interrogative sentences and its implications will be analysed in the next section.



Table 9 - Rules for QUESTIONS<sup>54</sup>

Propositional content	Any proposition or propositional function.
Preparatory	1. S does not know 'the answer', i.e., does not know if the proposition is true, or, in the case of the propositional function, does not know the information needed to complete the proposition truly (but see comment below). 2. It is not obvious to both S and H that H will provide the information at that time without being asked.
Sincerity	S wants this information
Essential	Counts as an attempt to elicit this information from H.
Comment:	There are two kinds of questions, (a) real questions, (b) exam questions. In real questions S wants to know (find out) the answer; in exam questions, S wants to know if H knows.

We can sum up the rules above with Schiffrin (1994:64): "The rules above show that a question is constituted under the following conditions: the speaker lacks knowledge of a particular state of affairs (preparatory rule) and wants to gain that knowledge (sincerity rule) by eliciting information from the hearer (essential rule)."

One characteristic of interrogatives is the fact that interrogatives are incomplete propositions. This means that interrogatives usually fulfil the preparatory conditions of questions (the speaker does not know the answer).

The interrogatives in verses 8 and 10 seem at first sight to fulfil the preparatory conditions of questions because they are incomplete statements. After Joseph told his brothers his dream they uttered the interrogative sentence (the utterance act - see page 61) which indicates a lack of knowledge about something, the same happening with the interaction with his father. As stated before, questions are part of the category named *directives* according to Searle's taxonomy. The illocutionary point of directives is an attempt by the speaker to get the hearer to do something.

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<sup>54</sup> See the in previous chapter (page 62) the 12 dimensions to analyse different speech acts as exposed by Searle.

Specifically for questions the illocutionary point is to elicit information from the hearer, which does not seem to be the case with these interrogatives.

One piece of evidence for this conclusion is the very nature of the text itself from a conversational<sup>55</sup> perspective. Analysing the pericope (see table above) one concludes that it is an interactive reported speech, “a narrative depiction of a conversation” (Miller 1992:176). One basic characteristic of a conversation is that it is structured in pairs, or alternating turns.<sup>56</sup> Question-answer pairs are very clear examples of adjacency (Goody, 1978:23). The first part of a pair creates an expectation for a second part to give continuity to the conversation (the first part creates a “slot” for the second one). In verses 6 and 7 we have the first part of the pair, Joseph getting his brothers’ attention and telling his dream. In verse 8 we find the second part of the pair, the reaction of the brothers to Joseph’s account, where the interrogative sentence occurs. Now, when a question occurs in the first part of a pair it prompts someone, a second speaker, for an answer (see Gen 16:8, 37:15-16), but this is not the case here. The telling of the dream prompted the sentence uttered by Joseph’s brothers and that is the end of this pair as well as the end of the first part of this interactive reported speech, at least from the narrator’s perspective. Thus, we have an interrogative that does not include a prompt for an answer and consequently an utterance that does not fulfil the essential rule for questions (it is not an attempt of the speaker to elicit information from the hearer). However, it is possible, in principle, for the dialogue to continue and the interrogative to be answered by a simple yes or no or yet with a statement completing the proposition in the interrogative sentence. It means that the interrogative in the verse has answerability (it is not a trick question - see May, 1989:227). Thus, it is still possible to consider the utterance a question,

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<sup>55</sup> Schiffrin devotes one chapter to conversational analysis (1994:232-281).

<sup>56</sup> Technically, adjacency pairs: For a description of adjacency pairs, their occurrence in narrative texts and relevance, see Miller, 1992:175-243. See also Brennestuhl (1988) for speech acts sequences.

however, with a defective literal illocutionary act. In this case we are dealing with an indirect speech act, a speech act performed by the performance of another act (see page 66 for the explanation of indirect speech acts).

This kind of indirect speech act is more commonly known as a rhetorical question, defined generally as the “posing of questions that expect no answer” (Frank, 1990:723) or questions that “aim not to gain information but to give information with passion” (WO § 18.2.g). Several problems may be observed as one approaches this kind of question in BH as well as in general linguistic literature. One such problem occurs in the process of distinguishing between the syntactic structure of interrogatives and the pragmatic function of questions. The so-called rhetorical question is a pragmatic function of some interrogatives and generally the syntax itself can tell little about the pragmatic function of this kind of utterance. Other clues are necessary for the recognition of the interrogative as a rhetorical question. Early studies in BH recognise the subject as difficult (see for instance the discussion of GKC’s position on page 33). More recent studies like WO try to classify questions functionally (see Table 1 page 19). They admit, however, that rhetorical questions are to be considered somewhere else (1992:322), except for the case of self-abasement formulas because they occur “within a consistent grammatical structure.” A few studies in BH try to reconcile form and function of rhetorical questions, *e. g.* Gordis 1932:213-216 and Van Selms 1972:143-149. However, in general, none of these studies produce significant results regarding the use of rhetorical questions in BH.

Neither Austin nor Searle dealt with rhetorical questions in their theory of speech acts, or rather, indirect speech acts. More recent studies try to approach the matter from the perspective of speech acts and offer solutions to the problems posed by rhetorical questions (*e.g.* Brown & Levinson 1978:56-289, Anzilotti 1982:290-302,

May 1989:227-243). Frank (1990:723-738) specially criticises the works of Anzilotti and Brown & Levinson as insufficient for a clear understanding of rhetorical questions. According to Frank, the problem starts in the definition of rhetorical questions. More problems arise in Anzilotti's study from a speech act theoretical point of view because it tends to concentrate on the speech act utterance (as the traditional speech act theory) and not on the discourse sequence. Frank argues correctly (1990:735) that it is only possible to perform an analysis of rhetorical questions if one applies the insights of discourse analysis. The same point is argued in general by Brennenstuhl (1988:55-69) and Schiffrin (1994).

Thus, the definition of rhetorical questions as "questions asked without intention of receiving a reply" is inadequate because one cannot recognise them without relying on the subjective analysis of the speaker's intent as well as analysing the hearers response. Frank shows that the recognition of rhetorical questions in her study was obtained "not ...by the syntactic form of the question, nor by assessments of performative intent. Rather, determinations were based on clues provided by speakers, in combination with hearers' responses" (1990:736). A similar approach is needed to understand the function of the interrogatives in verses 8 and 10. Levinson (1983:110) considers rhetorical questions as an example of interaction where the maxims of sincerity or quality are flouted (see the co-operative principle and maxims in Table 6 - Grice's co-operative principle page 66).

In the written text we have also to observe the perception of the narrator (sometimes the speaker intent is identified by the narrator in the quotative frame, by a metapragmatic verb<sup>57</sup>). We will see in the next example that quotative frames may play an important role in the identification of speech acts in narrative texts. The

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<sup>57</sup> We refer to metapragmatic verb as the verbs that occur in quotative frames, e.g. "He said" (see footnote 41).

quotative frame that introduces the direct speech in verse 8, however, is not specific enough to tell what kind of speech act is been performed by the interrogative (it is a single verb frame - one finite speech verb - by far the most common direct speech frame in BH) and it requires further analysis to discover the speech act performed in that utterance.

We may sum up the findings about the interrogative in verse 8 as follows:

- the quotative frame is not explicit regarding the speech act being performed by the speaker in the utterance; the verb frame only tells us that a conversation is taking place; the pericope, however, tells us that the brothers "hated him even more" after the uttering of the dream, thus giving the reader an idea of what to expect;
- the surface level characteristics of the sentence show that we are dealing with an interrogative sentence;
- the utterance occurs in the end of a pair in the dialogue which does not prompt for a sequence or, in this case an answer;
- consequently the utterance does not fulfil directly the essential condition for a question (request of information);
- however, in principle it is possible for the interrogative (an incomplete statement) to be answered;
- this opens the possibility for an indirect speech act;
- the characters involved in the dialogue have distinct social positions where the character with an "superior" position (the older brothers) is threatened by the character in a "inferior" position (the younger brother - נער - one that is not a man yet); Joseph does not make an open statement that he is going to reign over his brothers; however that is what the brothers understand from Joseph's telling them the dream.<sup>58</sup> His words are threatening because of what they imply in the social context. The narrator also indicates that the speaker that utters the sentence already holds negative feelings regarding the hearer (verse 4) and states that the dream makes the situation worse (verse 8 - "So they hated him yet more for his dreams and for his words").

Now, bearing in mind that the interrogatives in verse 8 are not used to perform the speech act question (a request for information), what kind of indirect speech act is

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<sup>58</sup> Looking at the accounts of dreams in this pericope one notices that all dreams have a predictive content and that the predictions (or their interpretation) are fulfilled. Regarding Joseph's account of the dream in verse 8 Redford (1970:70) states: "The brothers are not clairvoyant, nor gifted with powers of dream interpretation. But they do not need to be; the purport of Joseph's dream is abundantly clear."

been performed here? To answer that one must ask what is the illocutionary point of the speech act? (for the definition of illocutionary point see page 62). Considering the social relations between the characters involved (older and younger brothers), the implications of the first speech act (the telling of the dream that poses a threat) by the character in an inferior social position, it is normal to expect some sort of reaction from the character in a superior position. One should also note that the narrator uses the dialogue as an “explication” of the statement in verse 5: “Once Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more.” This speech act reaction comes in the form of criticism. We may say that the illocutionary point is an “attempt by the speaker to get the hearer to do something” (Searle 1979:13). The speaker wants or desires (sincerity condition - the speaker wants the hearer to do A) may be an apology from the hearer for being presumptuous or a change of attitude (although A is not necessarily in the hearer's best interest, otherwise the speech act could be a piece of advice). Notice that criticism can only occur in relation to a past act of the hearer in relation to the speech act (deeds or words in the past that somehow affect the interests of the speaker) but the speaker expects a future action from the hearer (depending on the social relations of speaker and hearer, the criticism may have the force of a command). One problematic point in the description, however, is that sentences uttered in interrogative form are incomplete propositions, thus having an indefinite propositional content (considering that criticism fits into the category of directives in Searle's taxonomy, the expected propositional content would be “a future act A of the hearer”). However, we must again remember that we are dealing with an indirect speech act and that is precisely the idea behind it: performing a speech act through another act.

We may now sum up the conclusions on verse 8:

- the doubling of the interrogative sentences indicates strong criticism by the speaker; further indication is the grammatical construction in the interrogative (infinitive absolute plus imperfect) which shows how Joseph's brothers understood the accounting of the dream;<sup>59</sup>
- with these characteristics it is possible to determine the performance of an indirect speech act (an utterance implying more than it is said), where the speaker criticises a past act of a first speaker;
- whether this is a rhetorical question or not would depend on how the notion "rhetorical question" is defined.

One important point to highlight is that the information above is the result of a mix between "common sense" plus the application of speech act theory. According to Schiffrin (1994:63), "analysing the process by which people identify speech acts is a critical part of speech act theory: thus, although uncovering bits and pieces of our knowledge (some of which might seem just "common sense") is tedious, this is exactly what speech act is concerned about." Although it seems tedious, it is important to perform a similar analysis on other interrogatives in our sample text.

Similar conclusions can be drawn on the interrogatives in verse 10 with some important variations that I want to highlight below:

- **the quotative frame is explicit regarding the speech act performed by the speaker in the utterance** from the viewpoint of the narrator ("he rebuked..."); multiple verb frames are helpful in telling not only that a conversation is taking place, but in many cases they tell us the speech act that has been performed;
- the surface level characteristics of the sentences show that we are dealing with interrogative sentences;
- this indicates that, at least from the viewpoint of the narrator, **an interrogative may be used to perform a speech act such as a rebuke**;
- the utterance occurs in the end of a pair in the dialogue which does not prompt for a sequence or, in this case, an answer;
- consequently the utterances do not fulfil directly the essential condition for questions (request for information);

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<sup>59</sup> In footnote 53 we quoted Van der Merwe *et al.* about the infinitive absolute plus imperfect regarding statements. Here the construction occurs in interrogative sentences as well as in several other places in BH (cf. Gen 18:18; 24:5; 43:7; 44:5; 44:15; 50:15). It seems by that that the brothers understood Joseph's accounting of the dream as a strong claim or prediction, thus the use of the construction in this context. GKC (§ 113.q) states that "The infinitive absolute is used to strengthen a question, especially in impassioned or indignant questions, e.g. Gen 37:8, 37:10" etc.



- however, in principle it is possible for the interrogatives (incomplete statements) to be answered; this is the answerability nudge, according to May (1989:229);
- the characters involved in the dialogue have distinct social positions where the character with a “superior” position (the father) is threatened by the character in an “inferior” position (Joseph, the son). In this case, however, despite the rebuke, the speaker does not have negative feelings toward the hearer; here are two important differences from the preceding interrogatives in verse 8; first, the social positions are considerably more relevant (brother/brother - father/son) in terms of authority; secondly, the expressed feelings between the parts differ considerably. In the first case, the criticism came from speakers who expressed negative feelings toward the hearer; in this case the criticism comes from a speaker with declared positive feelings toward the hearer (verse 3);
- the doubling of the interrogative sentences indicates strong criticism by the speaker; further indication is the grammatical construction in the interrogative (infinitive absolute plus imperfect), which shows how Joseph’s father understood the accounting of the dream;
- the presence of the metapragmatic verb in the speech frame, the lack of any kind of answer and the social position of the speakers in the dialogue make the pragmatic function of the utterance clear: it is a rebuke in the form of an interrogative;
- whether this is a rhetorical question or not would depend on how the notion “rhetorical question” is defined.

One important point to be stressed is that in utterances like the ones in verse 10, where the narrator explicitly declares the speech act performed (“he *rebuked* and said... - a multiple verb frame where each verb is inflected identically<sup>60</sup>), it is easier to identify the function of the interrogative (in many cases where a multiple verb frame or a *lē’môr* frame is used the speech act is indicated by the narrator).

Thus, we may say from the analysis above that when studying speech acts in narrative texts it is important to identify the quotative frames and metapragmatic verbs that introduce the utterances. We may also say that it is important to identify the broader pericope and context of the utterance which provide insights into the

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<sup>60</sup> Multiple verb frames (distinct from *lē’môr* frames) are frames that refer to the same speech event and have the same participant framework (Miller 1992:99). Miller prefers to include in the quotative frame only metapragmatic speech verbs, contrary to Longacre who understands other verbs to be part of the quotative frame, such as motion and psychological verbs. This definition, according to Miller, is too broad and consequently unclear (see Longacre 1989:160). Note that *lē’môr* frames are also used with metapragmatic non-speech verbs.



speech acts performed. For instance, the introduction of the matter in verse 5 indicates to the hearer the tone and emotional setting of the passage.

These first two examples serve to illustrate that the traditional definitions of rhetorical questions given above are problematic. One can see that “questions asked without the intention of receiving a reply” or “posing of questions that expect no answer” or even “questions that aim not to gain information but to give information with passion” are not enough to define the use of interrogative sentences such as the ones we find in verses 8 and 10. Beekman & Callow (1974:229-248), analysing rhetorical questions in the New Testament, provide some better insights into the matter than other studies in general. They present attested contextual clues that may indicate if an interrogative posits a “real” question or a rhetorical question in the Greek New Testament. They conclude that form is not sufficient to determine the function of an interrogative in the Greek New Testament which leaves the reader with an ambiguity. But most important in Beekman & Callow’s study is that they are not satisfied with a simplistic definition of rhetorical questions and they extend the definition in a more inclusive way which allows for a classification of the functions of rhetorical question. They say about the so-called rhetorical questions that “Although they are cast in the form of a question,<sup>61</sup> they are not used to obtain information. Rather, they are used to convey or call attention to information and to express the speaker’s attitudes, opinions, etc.” (Beekman & Callow 1974:229). From this broader definition the authors develop the following classification and functional chart for questions in the New Testament (1974:244):

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<sup>61</sup> What Beekman & Callow here call a question we stated previously we prefer to call an interrogative to avoid inconsistency. Interrogative refers to the syntactic construction while question refers to the pragmatic function of interrogatives.

Questions in the New Testament		
Classification	Function	
Real	To elicit unknown information	
	To elicit known information	
Rhetorical	To express certitude	Negative Affirmative Both
	To express incertitude, contingency, or deliberation	
	To make an evaluation or a command	Affirmative or Negative
	To highlight and introduce a new subject or a new aspect of one	

Although the proposed classification will probably not fit BH questions, it may prove useful as a model to a similar classification of the so-called rhetorical questions in the JN. For instance, Hyman (1984:447) defines the question in verse 8 as a critical/corrective question, which, according to our analysis, proves to be correct. Thus, after we identify different functions of interrogatives in BH we can build a similar chart for questions in BH. Hyman's label "critical/corrective" could be one entry on the functional side of the rhetorical questions classification. However, Hyman does not give evidence of a source for this classification nor classifies the questions in a systematic fashion, and in general, commentators put the type of interrogatives analysed here under the umbrella of rhetorical questions (see Coats, 1976:13) without further comment or clarification.

#### **ANALYSIS OF APPARENTLY UNANSWERED INTERROGATIVES**

In this section we analyse apparently unanswered interrogatives in the JN. We will analyse each of these interrogatives in its own pericope and see if similar principles as the ones we found in the introductory analysis are present and if similar conclusions can be drawn from them (the unanswered interrogatives are listed in Table 28 below).

**Genesis 37:13**

The next unanswered interrogative in our corpus occurs in the pericope 37:12-17. It is the continuation of the former pericope. Here one finds two dialogues, first between Joseph and his father and second between Joseph and an unknown man wandering in the field. In both dialogues we find interrogatives; however, only the first one will be analysed at this stage.

*Table 10 - Pericope: Genesis 37:12-17*

37.12 וַיִּלְכוּ אֲתָיו לְרֻעוֹת אֶת-צֹאן אֲבֵיהֶם בְּשָׂכָם:	Narrative - text setting
37.13 וַיֹּאמֶר יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל-יוֹסֵף הֲלוֹא אֲחִיךָ רְעִים בְּשָׂכָם לָכֵה וְאַשְׁלַחְךָ אֲלֵיהֶם וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ הִנְנִי:	Direct speech introduced by single verb frame - Interrogative - the same character continues speaking - Direct speech introduced by single verb frame - response from second character
37.14 וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ לֵךְ-נָא רֹאֵה אֶת-שְׁלוֹם אֲחִיךָ וְאֶת-שְׁלוֹם הַצֹּאן וְהַשְׂכֵּנִי דְבָר וַיִּשְׁלַחְהוּ מֵעֵמֶק חֲבֹרֹן וַיָּבֹא שְׂכֵמָה:	Direct speech introduced by single verb frame - Narrative
37.15 וַיִּמְצְאוּהוּ אִישׁ וְהָיָה תַּעֲהָ בַּשָּׂדֶה וַיִּשְׁאַלְהוּ הָאִישׁ לֵאמֹר מַה-תִּבְקֶשׁ:	Narrative - Direct speech introduced by <i>lê'môr</i> frame
37.16 וַיֹּאמֶר אֶת-אֲחִי אֲנֹכִי מִבְּקֶשׁ הַגִּידָה-נָּא לִּי אֵיפֹה הֵם רְעִים:	Direct speech introduced by single verb frame - answer followed by interrogative
37.17 וַיֹּאמֶר הָאִישׁ נִסְעוּ מִזֶּה כִּי שְׂמַעְתִּי אֲמָרִים נִלְכָּה דַּתִּינָה וַיִּלֶּךְ יוֹסֵף אַתָּר אֲחִיו וַיִּמְצָאם בְּדֹתָן:	Direct speech introduced by single verb frame - Narrative

The interrogative in verse 13 (הֲלוֹא אֲחִיךָ רְעִים בְּשָׂכָם) - "Are not your brothers pasturing the flock at Shechem?" seems to have different characteristics from the previous ones. We observed previously that the usage of הֲלוֹא is interpreted in various ways (e.g. genuine questions expecting positive answers or negative answers; for questions marked by reproach; speech to ask for attention; for emphatic stress (rather, certainly, surely, indeed, exactly) and other alternative renderings (except, only, please) - see page 23). This variety requires that one looks further into the text to understand the usage of the particle in each specific instance. The interrogative occurs in a reported speech, in the first part of a dialogue. The interrogative, however, is not directly paired with another sentence that posits an

answer. The character that utters the interrogative continues the speech with another utterance, a directive (a request - the speaker wants the hearer to do something) that is then positively accepted. Thus, the utterance in verse 13 does not seem to fulfil the preparatory condition for questions (the speaker is not interested in the answer probably because he already knows it and he knows that the hearer knows it as well) and consequently it does not fulfil the sincerity and essential conditions. But if the interrogative in this case is not a question, what kind of speech act is being performed here? Hypothetically, the question allows for an answer that could be positive or negative. Admitting that the answer is positive,<sup>62</sup> and both speaker and hearer know it, it is possible that the speaker is looking for agreement or confirmation on the part of the hearer. Once again, this leads us to the conclusion that we are dealing with some sort of indirect speech act. Searching for the correct speech act presented by the utterance leads one to look in the categories or the taxonomy of speech acts. Looking at the felicity conditions from Searle one comes to the conclusion that the interrogative fits into the category assertion or affirmation:

*Table 11 - Rules for STATEMENTS*

Propositional content	Any proposition <i>p</i> .
Preparatory	1. <i>S</i> has evidence (reasons, etc.) for the truth of <i>p</i> . 2. It is not obvious to both <i>S</i> and <i>H</i> that <i>H</i> knows (does not need to be reminded of, etc.) <i>p</i> .
Sincerity	<i>S</i> believes <i>p</i>
Essential	Counts as an undertaking to the effect that <i>p</i> represents an actual state of affairs.
Comment:	Unlike <i>argue</i> these do not seem to be essentially tied to attempting to convince. Thus "I am simply stating that <i>p</i> and not attempting to convince you" is acceptable, but "I am arguing that <i>p</i> and not attempting to convince you" sounds inconsistent.

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<sup>62</sup> Reading the narrative we learn that the brothers are not in Schechem, but somewhere else.

A statement is constituted under the following conditions: the speaker has reason to believe and has evidence of a certain fact (Joseph's brothers are in Schechem); it is not obvious to both speaker and hearer that the hearer does not know or need to be reminded of the fact been stated (if Joseph knows that his brothers are in Schechem, it is not obvious that he has that in mind at that moment; thus, as an introduction to the following request, he is reminded of the fact); the speaker believes that what he is stating is true (Jacob believes that his other sons are in Schechem).

In the first two interrogatives we analysed we reached the conclusion that they were not used to ask questions but to criticise. Here, in verse 13, the interrogative serves to the purpose of a statement. If we were to put the interrogatives in the form of a direct speech act instead of an indirect speech act we would have:

37:8 - Are you indeed to reign over us? Or are you indeed to have dominion over us?

*What an attitude! Do you really think that you will have dominion over us!*

37:10 - What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves to the ground before you?"

*What an inconceivable dream this one that you had about me, your own father, your mother and your brothers bowing to the ground before you!*

37:13 - "Are not your brothers pasturing the flock at Shechem? Come, I will send you to them." And he said to him, "Here I am."

*"Your brothers are pasturing in Schechem, remember? Come, I will send you to them." And he said, "Here I am."*

For the interrogatives above most English translations use, as in BH, an interrogative. However, some translations adopt the direct speech act (NIV - "As you know your brothers are grazing the flocks near Schechem.") or as in the 1909 Spanish translation Reina-Valera Bible ("Y dijo Israel á José: Tus hermanos apacientan las ovejas en Sichêm: ven, y te enviaré á ellos. Y él respondió: Heme aquí" - "Your brothers are pasturing the flock in Schechem: Come and I will send you to them. And he answered: Here I am."). This old translation once more shows that

some of the conclusions reached applying principles laid down by speech act theory have also been arrived at by the mere use of common sense.

### Genesis 37:26

The next interrogative which does not seem to have a direct answer occurs in the following pericope:

Table 12 - Pericope: Genesis 37:23-30

37.23 וַיְהִי בְּאֶשֶׁר-בָּא יוֹסֵף אֶל-אֶתְרוֹ וַיִּפְשְׁטוּ אֶת-יוֹסֵף אֶת-כְּתָנָתוֹ אֶת-כְּתָנֹת הַפָּסִים אֲשֶׁר עָלָיו:	Narrative - sequence from previous pericope
37.24 וַיִּקְחֵהוּ וַיִּשְׁלְכוּ אֹתוֹ הַבְּרָה וְהַבּוֹר לֶקַח אֵין בּוֹ מִים:	Narrative sequence
37.25 וַיֵּשְׁבוּ לֶאֱכֹל-לֶחֶם וַיִּשְׁאוּ עֵינֵיהֶם וַיֵּרְאוּ וְהִנֵּה אֲרֻחַת יִשְׁמַעְאֵלִים בָּאָה מִגִּלְעָד וַיִּמְלִיחֵם נָשָׂאִים נֹכָחַת וְצָרִי וְלֹט הוֹלְכִים לְהוֹרִיד מִצְרַיִמָּה:	Narrative sequence
37.26 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוּדָה אֶל-אֶתְרוֹ מִה-בֹּצֵעַ כִּי נִהְרָג אֶת-אֶחָיו וְכִסִּינוּ אֶת-דָּמּוֹ:	Direct speech introduced by single verb frame - Interrogative - character continues speech
37.27 לָכֵן וְנִמְכְּרֵנוּ לַיִּשְׁמַעְאֵלִים וַיִּלְנֹךְ אֶל-	Direct speech continues -
תְּהִי-כֵן כִּי-אֶחָיו בְּשָׂרֵנוּ הוּא וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ אֶתְרוֹ:	Narrative
37.28 וַיַּעֲבְרוּ אָנָשִׁים מִדִּינִים סָחָרִים וַיִּמְשְׁכוּ וַיַּעֲלוּ אֶת-יוֹסֵף מִן-הַבּוֹר וַיִּמְכְּרוּ אֶת-יוֹסֵף לַיִּשְׁמַעְאֵלִים בְּעֶשְׂרִים כֶּסֶף וַיָּבִיאוּ אֶת-יוֹסֵף מִצְרַיִמָּה:	Narrative
37.29 וַיָּשָׁב רְאוּבֵן אֶל-הַבּוֹר וְהִנֵּה אֵין-יוֹסֵף בַּבּוֹר וַיִּקְרַע אֶת-בְּגָדָיו:	
37.30 וַיָּשָׁב אֶל-אֶתְרוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר הִילָד אֵינֶנּוּ וְאֲנִי אָנָּה אֲנִי-כָּא:	Narrative followed by direct speech introduced by single verb frame - speech ends with the interrogative

The interrogative in verse 26 ("What profit is it if we slay our brother and conceal his blood?") is similar to the previous one in verse 13 in the sense that both have the same character continuing the speech after uttering the interrogative. The pairing is resolved in the narrative without a direct speech quote from the hearer (the brothers). The narrator resolves the dialogue stating that the brothers of the speaker (Judah) agreed with him. Although the dialogue is introduced by a single verb frame that only indicates that someone is

saying something without any indication of a specific speech act, we have recourse to the solution of the dialogue provided by the narrator to better understand the speech act. The fact that the brothers agreed with Judah shows that, from the perspective of the narrator, the speech act in the dialogue is one looking for agreement, *i.e.* trying to convince the hearer of something (changing beliefs). However, that does not necessarily imply that the utterance expressed by the interrogative is a directive. We are clearly dealing here with an indirect speech act. We can assume that the utterance following the interrogative is a directive ("Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother, our own flesh." And his brothers heeded him), but not the interrogative. We know by the flow of the narrative that the hearers had the intent to kill Joseph. Judah tries to convince them that killing their brother is not in their best interest and he then presents them with an option. Considering the religious background of the brothers, the fact that they are not supposed to kill other human beings, and further more, one of their brothers, we can conclude that Judah is trying to elicit a favourable conclusion to his following argument. Moreover, Judah's proposition not only avoid the problem of killing but get them another advantage: money, the real profit of the whole situation. This use of rhetorical questions (argumentative use) was pointed out by May (1989:241 n. 2). Being an indirect speech act we can invert the reading of the interrogative in 37:26 as follows:

"What profit is it if we slay our brother and conceal his blood? Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother, our own flesh." And his brothers heeded him.

*"I don't think that killing our brother and hiding his blood is a good idea. There is no profit on it. Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother, our own flesh." And his brothers heeded him.*

Thus, by the end of the fourth unanswered question in the narrative one can find at least three different speech act functions for the so-called rhetorical questions: the first two, verses 8 and 10, are directives used to criticise the hearer (expecting some future change); the third one, verse 13, is used to make a statement (reminding the hearer of a certain state of affairs) and the fourth one, verse 26, is used to try to convince the hearer to change a possible course of action. Notice that in the first two verses the interrogatives are used in the speech to end a dialogue, while the next two interrogatives analysed are used to introduce speech acts in the directive class. The so-called rhetorical questions are used as an introduction to speech following it.

### **Genesis 37:30**

The next interrogative apparently without an answer (37:30) occurs in the same pericope as the previous one and we will refer to that pericope (page 92) as we argue its function. Syntactically, the interrogative **וְאֲנִי אָנֹכִי אֵי-כָּא** ("and I, where shall I go?") is indicated as such by the question word **אָנֹכִי** (see page 33 for the use of the question word). It is part of a larger unit of speech and it must be analysed within it **וַיָּשָׁב אֶל-אֶחָיו וַיֹּאמֶר הִלָּד אֵינֶנּוּ וְאֲנִי אָנֹכִי אֵי-כָּא** ("and [Reuben] returned to his brothers, and said, 'The lad is gone; and I, where shall I go?'"). More precisely, the interrogative occurs at the end of a small division inside the narrative. This sub-section comprises verses 29 and 30 where one can find a stretch of direct discourse which cannot be immediately characterised as a dialogue. Although one can assume that the utterance was uttered in the presence of a certain audience (Reuben's brothers) the narrator presents no answer from that audience and changes the direction of the narrative into the cover-up of the actions performed by Joseph's brothers (some commentators will call that a scene change, see Westermann 1986:43). Thus, one has a direct speech that has only one turn and no pair, differently to what is normally expected considering that an interrogative is



uttered. In order to understand the speech act one must ask who is the hearer of the utterance. There are two possibilities: the brothers or Reuben himself. Let us discuss this last possibility first.

As we have stated above, the surface characteristics of the pericope do not characterise it as a dialogue (there is no pairing sequence). We also stated previously that an interactive reported speech is the “depiction of conversation” and the text does not give clear signs of a conversation happening here, except for the use of the metapragmatic verb “said”. This could be characterised as a non-interactive reported speech. Miller (1992:176) points out that these cases “may be depicted as a (one-sided) conversation and exhibits many of the same structures and conventions found in interactive reported speech.” Besides that, the verb *אמר* is clearly used in some places to depict thought<sup>63</sup> as in Genesis 20:11 (see also 38:11):

וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָהָם כִּי אִמָּרְתִּי בְךָ  
אֵין-יִרְאַת אֱלֹהִים בְּמָקוֹם הַזֶּה וְהָרְגוּנִי  
עַל-דְּבַר אִשְׁתִּי

Abraham said, "I did it because I *thought*, There is no fear of God at all in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.

This could lead one to the conclusion that the speaker is somehow talking to himself and expressing his fears in relation to his future as he is the one that had the intention of returning Joseph safely into his father's hands (see verse 22).<sup>64</sup>

However, it is also possible to argue that the speaker is actually speaking to his brothers and expressing his fears to them (Gen 42:22 confirms this position). When describing reported speech in conversation and narration Miller (1992:175) states that “The speech of characters may be presented directly, without narrative comment, or their speech may be condensed through various narrative devices,

<sup>63</sup> In some places the verb occurs in the expression *אמר בלבו* “to say in the heart” (see BDB page 56).

<sup>64</sup> Reuben's reasons for returning Joseph to his father are not expressed in the narrative at this stage.

such as narrative substitutions within reported speech..., re-analysis of direct speech, or *deletion of one (or more) pair-parts of reported speech from a conversation (when they are recoverable from the narrative)*" (my italics). The deletion is a possibility here. It is possible to understand that the actions taken by the brothers<sup>65</sup> are an answer or a pragmatic response to the problem stated by Reuben in the utterance of the interrogative (the depiction of a hearer performing an act as a response to a first pair part in a dialogue).<sup>66</sup> Note the development of the text. After Joseph is taken away (verse 28) and Reuben returns to the pit he sees that Joseph is not there (verse 29 - "he rent his clothes"). The text proceeds (verse 30) by telling that he returns to his brothers and utters the interrogative in question. In *lê'môr* frames it is usual to have a metapragmatic non-speech verb in the frame (like "he returned saying..."). However, in multiple verb frames the verbs included in the frame are usually verbs of speech (like the quotative frame in verse 10 - "he rebuked and said..."). Thus, we may conclude that the verb שׁוּב is not part of the quotative frame that introduces the interrogative, although it is a common verb that precedes quotative frames in BH (see 38:22; Ex 4:18; 5:22; 32:31; etc). One can say then that after Reuben rent his clothes (a sign of distress and grief), he returned and performed the speech act in front of his brothers. In other words, the brothers are the target audience for the utterance act. Assuming then that the brothers are the audience to whom the interrogative was addressed to, we may proceed to analyse the speech act from this angle.

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However, one can assume that as the older son he had the responsibility for doing that.

<sup>65</sup> The text does not specify which of the brothers took action and whether Reuben participated in the action or not.

<sup>66</sup> The presentation of a second pair part in adjacency pairs may occur in different ways. Miller (1992:195-6) shows how second pair parts may be presented in narrative as pragmatic responses, narrative responses and silence.

The preparatory conditions for questions (page 79) are that the speaker “does not know the information needed to complete the proposition truly” and that it is not obvious “to both S and H that H will provide the information at that time without being asked.” These preparatory conditions seem true regarding Reuben’s utterance. He does not know what to do in face of the situation (he has to go back and answer for Joseph to his father); it is not obvious that the brothers will say anything to Reuben regarding the matter. It is also possible to argue that the sincerity condition is fulfilled, the speaker wants (one can even say desperately) to know what to do in this situation. Considering that Reuben utters the sentence in front of his brothers it is reasonable to think that he wants some answer from them. The answer is possibly given in the *pragmatic response* that follows, thus fulfilling the essential condition for questions (counts as an attempt to elicit this information from H). A *pragmatic response* is an action that is “functionally equivalent to a speech event in an oral conversation” (Miller 1992:196) while a *narrative response* depicts an action that is performed as a response but in a different time/space frame (see Ex 1:15-17 - the action of the midwives is carried out in secret, a narrative response to an order given by the king). Although we cannot be certain that Reuben was present when the action took place, it is reasonable to assume it. Thus paraphrasing the text one would have:

*The lad is gone! And I, where shall I go?  
Don't worry, we have a plan. / Don't worry we will make a plan to save your face.*

That would leave us with a true question or an information-seeking question as opposed to a so-called rhetorical question.

However, most modern readers (commentators) express a different understanding of the interrogative. Hyman (1984:438) quotes this verse with others as a question that

"express[es] an emotion, such as surprise, bewilderment, or despair." Westermann (1986:42) comments on this verse saying "Reuben *exclaims* in the presence of his brothers, "The boy is not there! And I — where am I to turn?" One could expand Reuben's last sentence "... from my father's face"; he knows he is the one to answer when his father asks after Joseph" (my italics). Keil & Delitzsch (1976:337) explains the sequence of events after Reuben rent his clothes saying that he "*exclaimed* : "The boy is no more, and I, whither shall I go!" — how shall I account to his father for his disappearance!" (my italics). From these examples it is obvious that the sentences are normally understood as expressing an exclamation.

The first sentence - *The boy is no more!* - is easy to understand as an exclamation, specially considering that the narrator uses in verse 29 the particle הִנֵּה expressing the great surprise Reuben felt when he did not find Joseph in the pit (see Van der Merwe *et al.* § 43.7). Our analysis shows, however, that although the first sentence is exclamatory in function (expressing surprise), the second one is a real question where Reuben is seeking from his brothers a solution for the problem that the absence of Joseph will cause him.

Thus, after observing five different interrogatives that do not have a clear answer in the BH text one finds out that an apparently unanswered question with an apparent exclamatory function may be a "real" information seeking question, like the case of the last interrogative discussed above.

### **Genesis 39:9**

Genesis 39:9 presents another interrogative without an apparent answer as indicated in the pericope below:

Table 13 - Pericope: Genesis 39:7-10

39.7 וַיְהִי אֶחָד הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וַתִּשָּׂא אִשְׁת־אֲדֹנָיו אֶת־עֵינֶיהָ אֶל־יוֹסֵף וַתֹּאמֶר שְׁכַבְּהָ עִמִּי:	Narrative followed by direct speech introduced by single verb frame
39.8 וַיִּמָּאֵן וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־אִשְׁת־אֲדֹנָיו הֵן אֲדֹנִי לֹא־יַדַּע אֵתִי מִה־בִּבְתּוֹ וְכָל־אֲשֶׁר־יֵשׁ־לִּי נִתָּן בְּיָדִי:	Direct speech introduced by multiple verb frame
39.9 אֵינְנִי גִדּוֹל בְּבֵית הַזֶּה מִמֶּנִּי וְלֹא־חֲשׂוֹן מִמֶּנִּי מֵאוֹמָה כִּי אִם־אוֹתָךְ בְּאֲשֶׁר אַתָּה־אֹשֶׁתּוֹ וְאִיךְ אֶעֱשֶׂה הַרְעָה הַגְּדֹלָה הַזֹּאת וְחִטָּאתִי לֵאלֹהִים:	Interrogative sentence
39.10 וַיְהִי כַּדְּבָרָה אֶל־יוֹסֵף יוֹם וָיוֹם וְלֹא־שָׁמַע אֵלָיָה לְשֹׁכֵב אֶצְלָהּ לַהֲיוֹת עִמָּה:	Narrative

This pericope is part of a different setting in the JN. Here, Joseph is living in Egypt and working in the house of "Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard." After some time in this house as a worker Joseph finds favour in his master's eyes and is promoted to the position of "overseer" in that house. Looking at the description Joseph gives of his own position in verses 8 and 9 of this chapter one can see that he occupied a very privileged position of authority in that house. However, in the dialogue in which the interrogative occurs we have Joseph in an interchange with someone supposedly in a superior position, his master's wife. The first pair of the dialogue, a direct speech by Potiphar's wife, is a directive in which she demands: שְׁכַבְּהָ עִמִּי ("Lie with me"). Because of her position and the way she phrases the utterance she implies more than a simple request. However, Joseph finds himself in a position to refuse her demands because obeying it would be an offence of a social code of conduct where Potiphar's wife's wrongdoing could be uncovered. She could not use her authority openly to force Joseph to obedience. The text tells us that after the episode she kept on insisting, up to a point where she physically tries to make Joseph submit for her demands.

The interrogative sentence occurs at the end of a direct speech by Joseph, the second pair part of a dialogue. No apparent reply is given to the interrogative

וַאֲיֵךְ אַעֲשֶׂה הַרְעָה הַגְדִּלָּה הַזֹּאת וְחָטָאתִי לֵאלֹהִים: that is marked as such by the particle אֵיךְ (see page 32 for the use of the particle).<sup>67</sup> The narrator uses verse 10 as a closing statement for the episode. Similar to verses 8 and 10 of Chapter 37, the narrator limits the interchange to only one pair in the dialogue where the interrogative sentence occurs in the second pair-part. Similarly to the speech frame in 37:10, where the narrator is declaring the speech act performed by the utterance, this second pair part is introduced by a multiple verb frame ("He *refused*<sup>68</sup> and said"). However, the frame is introducing a larger stretch of speech that includes the interrogative but does not refer exclusively to it. It implies that the speech act indicated by the frame (to refuse) is performed by the whole speech and not only the utterance of the interrogative. Thus, to find out which speech act is performed in the uttering of the interrogative it is necessary to consider again the conditions in which it occurs.

As expressed previously, interrogatives are good candidates for the speech act question because of their nature (incomplete propositions). It is, however, easy to rule out that possibility when the contextual conditions show that the speaker is not seeking information from the hearer (essential condition for questions). Considering Joseph's arguments, there is no answer that can be given to such a question; he is totally convinced that he cannot do such evil. Besides that, the configuration of the dialogue shows that the pair is coherent and complete; it presents a meaningful interchange between speaker and hearer. It is also difficult to argue that the sequence of the text poses a pragmatic or narrative response to a question. Thus, we may

<sup>67</sup> Observing more closely the usage of the particle in BH (61 instances in total) one can see that most occurrences of the particle in narrative texts is to pose a question in which the speaker is facing an unreasonable situation, expressing disappointment or confusion. The particle is also used to pose real information seeking questions (see 2 Sam 1:5; 1 Kgs 12:6) and a number of times used to introduce a sentence which expresses an exclamation (see 2 Sam 1:19, 25, 27; Ps 73:19; Is 14:4).

<sup>68</sup> Longacre translates the text as "He refused *her* and said" as if the verb had a pronominal suffix attached to it, but the verb easily fits into the frame.

assume that we are dealing once again with an indirect speech act. Now, consider again the situation in which the speech event occurs. The hearer receives an order (or at least a request from someone in a superior position<sup>69</sup>) to do something that is socially inappropriate. The narrator states that the hearer “refuses” the demand or request and reports the speech which gives the reasons why the demand/request is refused (Joseph does not want to breach the trust of his master). Following this explanation is the interrogative, which in the context refuses the first speaker’s request/demand. Directly stated, the speech act would be approximately: “No, I will not do such evil against my master and sin against God” (“against God” is another reason added as to why he is denying the request/demand - a moral/religious reason).

Observing the direct speech as we propose above it is possible to regard it as a simple answer. However, to be an answer (giving information requested by the first speaker) the first pair would have to pose a question (directly or indirectly), and that is not the case (“Would you lie with me?” - a request and a question). Potiphar’s wife’s speech act fits into Searle’s taxonomy as a request or command – although not a request for information, but for action, not a command to give information, but to act. Interpreting this speech act as an answer is due to the close relationship between the rules for requests and those for questions. Actually, questions could easily fit into a sub-category of requests (Searle 1969:69). A comparative chart between the two categories will help to identify the similarities:

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<sup>69</sup> One of the dimensions by which a speech act can be figured out is the strength with which the illocutionary point is presented. Although different speech acts may have the same illocutionary point they may have different strengths (see Searle’s 12 dimensions for analysing speech acts on page 62ff., points 4 and 5).



*Table 14 - Comparing questions and requests*

<b>Rules</b>	<b>Questions</b>	<b>Requests</b>
Propositional content	Any proposition or propositional function.	Future act A of H
Preparatory	<p>1. S does not know 'the answer', i.e., does not know if the proposition is true, or, in the case of the propositional function, does not know the information needed to complete the proposition truly (but see comment below).</p> <p>2. It is not obvious to both S and H that H will provide the information at that time without being asked.</p>	<p>1. H is able to do A. S believes H is able to do A.</p> <p>2. It is not obvious to both S and H that H will do A in the normal course of events of his own accord</p>
Sincerity	S wants this information	S wants H to do A
Essential	Counts as an attempt to elicit this information from H.	Counts as an attempt to get H to do A.
Comment:	There are two kinds of questions, (a) real questions, (b) exam questions. In real questions S wants to know (find out) the answer; in exam questions, S wants to know if H knows.	<b>Order and command</b> have the additional preparatory rule that S must be in a position of authority over H. <b>Command</b> probably does not have the 'pragmatic' condition requiring non-obviousness. Furthermore in both, the authority relationship infects the essential condition because the utterance counts as an attempt to get H to do A in virtue of the authority of S over H.

Schiffrin (1994:71) points out the similarities between requests and questions as follows:

the preparatory, sincerity, and essential conditions for questions and requests are similar: since it is not obvious that H will provide information without being asked (preparatory conditions for questions), or that H will not do A in the normal course of events of her own accord (preparatory conditions of requests) both questions and requests count as attempts to get H to do something (their essential conditions) that S wants (their sincerity conditions). The difference between questions and requests is that what a speaker wants through a question ("elicit information") is more specific than what a speaker wants through a request ("do A").

Note however, the comment by Searle in the rules for requests regarding orders and commands (demands). There are three differences to be noted. One, that S must be in a position of authority over H. Two, that commands probably do not have the pragmatic condition of non-obviousness. Three, that the essential condition is

infected by the principle of authority: counts as an attempt to get H to do A in virtue of the authority of S over H. I believe these three differences between simple requests and commands are present in our text: Potiphar's wife is in a position of authority over Joseph; the principle of non-obviousness is actually irrelevant, and she tries to get Joseph to do something (lie with her) based on her authority. Based on the unreasonable situation the fulfilment of her command would bring, Joseph refuses it. Now, when a command is refused, it also stands as a challenge of authority or a reproach. Usually a reproach comes from someone in a superior position; however, the social circumstances in which this episode occurs, a command to breach an important social rule (to commit adultery<sup>70</sup>) allows some space to the hearer in an inferior social position to refuse to obey the command (or accept a demand) and reproach the speaker. The use of the particle *וְיָאָר*, "to reproach the person addressed" (Van der Merwe *et al.* § 43.6.ii) further strengthens this point of view. As noted previously in the analysis of 37:8,10, a reproach is also a directive, and counts as an attempt to get H to do A (Joseph tries to change Potiphar's wife's attitude).

Two observations on this analysis are significant. One has to do with the nature of speech act sequences. In order to identify the nature of Joseph's speech act, it was necessary to investigate the speech act that "generated" it. A second one is the possibility of one speech utterance performing more than one speech act as is the case here (a refusal and rebuke at the same time). We will come back to these points and their implications in the conclusion.

Thus, by the end of another apparently non-answered interrogative we see that an interrogative may be used in speech to refuse a demand and to rebuke the speaker.

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<sup>70</sup> That adultery was considered a serious offence in Egyptian culture can be seen in The Story of Two Brothers, *ANET*, 1955:23.

**Genesis 40:7 and 8**

Genesis 40:8 presents another interrogative that has no apparent answer. The verse is in a long pericope that covers verses 6 to 19 reporting a dialogue between Joseph and two other prisoners. This new setting in the narrative has been explained previously in the text as a consequence of the plot of Potiphar's wife against Joseph because he refused to lie with her. Joseph is now in prison, but again in a privileged position as he found favour in the eyes of the warden of the prison. The two other prisoners are officials of the king of Egypt, the chief of the cupbearers and the chief of the bakers. Joseph was in charge of these prisoners (verse 4).

*Table 15 - Pericope: Genesis 40:6-19*

40.6 וַיִּבְּאֵהֶם אֱלֹהִים יוֹסֵף בְּבֹקֶר וַיֵּרָא אֹתָם וְהֵנָּם זֹעֲפִים:	Narrative
40.7 וַיִּשְׁאַל אֶת-סְרִיסֵי פְרָעָה אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ בַּמִּשְׁמֶר בֵּית אֲדֹנָיו לֵאמֹר מָדוּעַ פְּנִיכֶם רָעִים הַיּוֹם:	Direct speech introduced by <i>lēmôr</i> frame - interrogative
40.8 וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו חֲלוֹם חֲלַמְנוּ וּפְתָר אֵין אִתּוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם יוֹסֵף הֲלֹוא לְאֱלֹהִים פְּתָרָנִים סִפְרוּ-נָא לִי:	Direct speech introduced by single verb frame - choral speech - Direct speech introduced by single verb frame - interrogative
40.9 וַיִּסְפֹּר שְׂרֵי-הַמִּשְׁקִים אֶת-חֲלָמוֹ לְיוֹסֵף וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ בְּחֻלּוֹמִי וְהִנֵּה-גִפְּנִי לִפְנֵי:	Direct speech introduced by multiple verb frame
40.10 וּבְגִפְּנֵי שְׁלֹשָׁה שָׂרִיגִים וְהִיא כְּפָרַחַת עֲלֶתָהּ נֹצֶה הַבָּשִׂילִי אֲשַׁכְּלֶתִיהָ עֲנָבִים:	
40.11 וְכֹס פְּרָעָה בְּיָדִי וְאָקַח אֶת-הָעֲנָבִים וְאֶשְׁתָּה אֹתָם אֶל-כֹּס פְּרָעָה וְאִתּוֹ אֶת-הַכֹּס עַל-כֵּי פְרָעָה:	
40.12 וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ יוֹסֵף זֶה פְּתָרְנוֹ שְׁלֹשֶׁת הַשָּׂרִיגִים שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים הֵם:	Direct speech introduced by single verb frame
40.13 בְּעֹד שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים יֵשֶׁא פְרָעָה אֶת-רֹאשׁוֹ וְהַשִּׁיבּוֹ עַל-כִּנּוֹ וְנָתַתָּ כֹּס-פְּרָעָה בְּיָדוֹ כַּמִּשְׁפָּט הָרָאוּשׁוֹן אֲשֶׁר הָיִיתָ מִשְׁקָהוּ:	
40.14 כִּי אִם-זָכַרְתָּנִי אִתָּךְ כְּאֲשֶׁר נִיטַב לָךְ וַעֲשִׂיתָ-נָא עִמָּדִי תַסֵּד וְהִזְכַּרְתָּנִי אֶל-פְּרָעָה וְהוֹצֵאתָנִי מִן-הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה:	
40.15 כִּי-גִנַּב גִּנְבֹתִי מֵאֶרֶץ הָעִבְרִים וְגַם-פָּה לֹא-עָשִׂיתִי מֵאוֹמָה כִּי-שָׂמוּ אֹתִי בְבוֹר:	
40.16 וַיֵּרָא שְׂרֵי-הָאֲפִים כִּי טוֹב פְּתָר וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-יוֹסֵף אֲף-אֲנִי בְחֻלּוֹמִי וְהִנֵּה שְׁלֹשָׁה סָלִי חֲרִי עַל-רֹאשִׁי:	Narrative - Direct speech introduced by single verb frame
40.17 וּבִסָּל הָעֲלִיּוֹן מִכָּל מֵאֲכָל פְּרָעָה מַעֲשֶׂה אִפָּה וְהָעֹדִף אֲכָל אֹתָם מִן-הַסָּל מֵעַל רֹאשִׁי:	
40.18 וַיַּעַן יוֹסֵף וַיֹּאמֶר זֶה פְּתָרְנוֹ שְׁלֹשֶׁת הַסָּלִים שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים הֵם:	Direct speech introduced by multiple verb frame

40.19 בְּעֹר שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים יִשָּׂא פְרַעֲהָ אֶת־רֹאשׁוֹ  
 מִעֲלִיד וְחָלָה אוֹתָהּ עַל־עַז וְאָכַל הָעוֹר  
 אֶת־בְּשָׂרָהּ מִעֲלִיד:

This pericope presents two interrogatives (in verses 7 and 8). Since the interrogative in verse 7 is part of the pair immediately preceding the pair in which the unanswered interrogative occurs, it is assumed that an analysis of both questions would be more profitable than the two interrogatives appearing in separate analysis. Since this is a longer pericope, the pairing in the dialogue will be investigated first. Verses 7/8a form a first pair that is clearly identifiable as answer/question pair, not only by the characteristics of the sentences but also by the *lê'môr* frame that introduces it (He 'asked... saying). Verse 8a presents then a simple answer to the question. Peculiar to this pair is the fact that the speaker addresses both hearers in the first pair and receives an answer from both (*they* said: *We* had a dream...). This is a case similar to 37:8 where one finds a choral speech (see footnote 46), a situation impossible in real life, but explained as one speaker speaking for the group.<sup>71</sup> The second pair comprises verses 8b/9-11. Verse 8b is introduced by single verb frame and verse 9 (the second pair part) is introduced by a multiple verb frame. Verses 12-15 present the follow up to the pair which is introduced by a single verb frame.

We stated above that the first pair presents a question/answer pair. However, this statement needs to be verified by means of the rules for speech acts. Verse 6 explains the immediate context in which the dialogue takes place - "When Joseph came to them in the morning and saw them, they were troubled." The speaker then utters the sentence in the interrogative form - מָדוּעַ פְּנֵיכֶם רָעִים הַיּוֹם: ("Why are your faces downcast today?") marked as such by the question word מָדוּעַ, meaning

<sup>71</sup> Miller (1992:307) states about this pair that "This adjacency pair as a whole differs from the prototypical dialogic ideal in that the response (presumably uttered by only one of the addressees) is presented as uttered by both of the addressees in unison."

“why?” (see page 33 for discussion of the meaning of the question word; also footnote 75). The utterance is a question because it meets the conditions for questions (preparatory, sincerity and essential conditions; see Table 9). The evidence is not only clear from the narrator’s perspective that introduces the reported speech with the pragmatic verb “asked”, but also from the interaction itself, where the hearer provides the information requested (an explanation). Thus we may conclude that the interrogative in verse 7 presents a real question. Remember that this is a case where the obvious must be stated in order to complete our analysis.

However, as we move toward the next interrogative in verse 8, the conclusions cannot be reached in such a straightforward way. This is due to various reasons. First, when a pair is complete, it is not so obvious what someone should expect in the sequence. For instance, in the previous sequence several options are possible:

- 1     “Why are your faces downcast today?”  
       They said to him, “We have had dreams, and there is no one to interpret them.”  
       And Joseph said to them, “Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell them to me, I pray you.”
- 2     Why are your faces downcast today?  
       They said to him, “We have had dreams, and there is no one to interpret them.”  
       And Joseph said to them,  
       *“Oh, I am sorry.”*
- 3     “Why are your faces downcast today?”  
       They said to him, “We have had dreams, and there is no one to interpret them.”  
       And Joseph said to them,  
       *“May be we can ask the prophet to come and interpret if next time he is around?”*
- 4     “Why are your faces downcast today?”  
       They said to him, “We have had dreams, and there is no one to interpret them.”  
       And Joseph said to them,  
       *“Do you believe they mean anything?”*

Number one corresponds to the text we have in RSV. Examples 2, 3 and 4 are just random examples of what could also be the next exchange in the dialogue. Each of them ought to be considered and analysed within a determinate set of values and

beliefs. Examples 2 and 3 belong in a context where speaker and hearer believe that dreams have a meaning and therefore can be and must be interpreted. Example 4 shows that although, the speaker is committed to the belief that dreams have a meaning, the hearer questions this belief. Examples 2 and 3 also show that even if one knows the values of speaker and hearer, the next move is unpredictable. Second, the analysis of the interrogative is not straightforward because the speaker does not open a slot for an answer after the utterance of the interrogative; maybe because he will open it at a later stage, or because he really does not want an answer. Third, the narrator uses in the speech frame the generic verb "said" that only tells the reader that something is being uttered. Thus, we must analyse the utterance more thoroughly in order to identify the speech act.

The interrogative (הֲלוֹא לֵאלֹהִים פְּתָרָנִים) - "Do not interpretations belong to God?" itself is marked by the particle הֲלוֹא, in a dialogue pair very similar to the one we analysed previously in 37:13 (page 89): a הֲלוֹא interrogative in the first pair followed by speech by the same speaker and then a response from the hearer. In 37:13 we concluded that the interrogative served to convey the purpose of an statement. A very similar analysis fits the interrogative in 40:8.

Observing the sequence of speech we know that the interrogative is not a real question (the speaker is not really seeking information), otherwise he would open the floor to an answer at some stage. However, the speaker continues the speech and introduces a request following the interrogative. We know that the sentence following the interrogative (סִפְּרוּ־נָא לִי: - "Tell them to me, I pray you.") is a request because it meets the conditions for requests (see Table 7 - Types of illocutionary act, conditions for requests according to Searle).



Thus, if the interrogative is not used to pose a question, we must ask what kind of speech act is being performed in the utterance of the interrogative. We stated previously that interrogatives are good candidates for the speech act question, but when interrogatives are not used for questions then we are dealing with an indirect speech act. It seems that the speech act performed in the utterance of the interrogative is a statement (as it is the case with 37:13). Let us recapitulate the conditions for statements (see Table 11 - Rules for STATEMENTS): the speaker has reason to believe and has evidence of a certain fact (Joseph believes that interpretation of dreams belong to God); it is not obvious to both speaker and hearer that the hearer does not know or need to be reminded of the fact been stated (if the hearers believe that the interpretation of dreams belong to God, it is not obvious that they have that in mind at that moment, thus, as an introduction to the following request, they are reminded of the fact; if they do not believe interpretations belong to God, the speaker let them know that he believes that and he is looking for agreement); the speaker believes that what he is stating is true (Joseph believes that interpretation of dreams belong to God). If it were the case that the hearer did not believe in the statement or did not agree with the speaker, the course of the dialogue would be something different, like - "Why should we? We don't believe interpretations belong to God!" However, the hearers apparently agree with the statement and accede to the following request.<sup>72</sup> Let us imagine that there were no statements before the request. Then, the hearers could come up with another request, looking for a reason as to why they should tell the first speaker their dreams. These hypothetical observations help one see how the sequences of

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<sup>72</sup> One possibility is that Joseph is in a friendly mood, disagreeing with the statement that no one was available to interpret their dreams. According to Westermann (1986:75) the prisoners were downcast because they believed that only specialised interpreters, unavailable at the prison, could perform that task. Joseph was not considered one of these specialised interpreters by them. Further confirmation can be drawn by the fact that the chief of the bakers only told his dream after observing that the interpretation of the first dream was a favourable one (40:16).



speech acts are chained, not as a rule but as indications of possibilities based on the principle of co-operation and appropriateness.

So far, in the two examples that we investigated (37:13 and 40:8b), the statement that הלוֹא is used to mark rhetorical questions holds as long as one understands that rhetorical questions are used to make statements (e.g. Van der Merwe *et al.* § 43.2.1.ii.b - "In this way a statement is usually made which cannot easily be contested by the person addressed"). Three other cases of questions introduced with הלוֹא occur in our sample text and will be analysed later (Gen 42:22; 44:5, 15 - see Table 5 - Distribution of interrogative markers in the Joseph Narrative, page 47).

Thus, an interrogative sentence marked by הלוֹא is used here to utter a statement.

### Genesis 41:38

The next pericope that presents an interrogative without an apparent answer is Genesis 41:37-41:

Table 16 - Pericope: Genesis 41:37-41

41.37 וַיִּטֹּב הַדְּבָר בְּעֵינֵי פַרְעֹה וּבְעֵינֵי כָל-עֲבָדָיו:	Narrative
41.38 וַיֹּאמֶר פַּרְעֹה אֶל-עֲבָדָיו הֲנִמְצָא כֹהָ אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים בּוֹ:	Direct speech introduced by single verb frame - interrogative
41.39 וַיֹּאמֶר פַּרְעֹה אֶל-יוֹסֵף אַחֲרֵי הוֹדִיעַ אֱלֹהִים אוֹתָךְ אֶת-כָּל-זֹאת אֵין-נִבּוֹן וְחָכָם כָּמוֹךָ:	Direct speech introduced by single verb frame - same character
41.40 אִתָּהּ תִּהְיֶה עַל-בֵּיתִי וְעַל-פִּיךָ יִשָּׁק כָּל-עַמִּי רַק הַכֶּסֶף אֲגַדֵּל מִמֶּנִּי:	
41.41 וַיֹּאמֶר פַּרְעֹה אֶל-יוֹסֵף רְאֵה נִתְּתִי אֶתְךָ עַל כָּל-אֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם:	Direct speech introduced by single verb frame - same character

The interrogative is uttered by Pharaoh after the chief of the cupbearers told him that Joseph had interpreted his and the chief of the bakers' dreams correctly when they were in prison. Joseph is summoned to the presence of the Pharaoh (41:14) and Pharaoh speaks to him (verses 15-16):

*And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it; and I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it."*

*Joseph answered Pharaoh, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer."*

Pharaoh then tells Joseph the dreams (verses 17-24); Joseph interprets them (verses 25-32) and gives Pharaoh advice regarding the actions that should be taken in view of the interpretation (verses 33-36). Following this sequence in the narrative (verse 37-38) we have the part of the text in which the interrogative occurs.

In verse 37 the narrator describes the situation. Joseph's interpretation and advice were good in the eyes of Pharaoh and his servants. Observe that the pericope cannot be characterised as a dialogue because all instances of direct reported speech (verses 38, 39 and 41) are by the same character without any intervening narrative or speech. The pericope continues with a narration describing the actions taken by the first speaker (Pharaoh), first addressing his servants (וַיֹּאמֶר פַּרְעֹה אֶל-עֲבָדָיו) and then Joseph himself .

It is difficult to determine the presence of a pragmatic or narrative response from Pharaoh's servants to the speech act performed in the uttering of the interrogative. Remember that a pragmatic response is an action that is functionally equivalent to a speech event in oral conversation, while a narrative response depicts an action that is performed as a response in a different time/space frame (definition on page 97). If there was an actual answer or a pragmatic response the narrator decided to omit it. It is, however, reasonable to assume a possible narrative response: there was no apparent objection to Pharaoh's thoughts. But then, the speech act is performed here by the supreme authority in Egypt in front of his servants, and it is normal to expect no argument in such a setting.

The sentence (הַנִּמְצָא כָזֶה אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים בּוֹ) - "Can we find such a man as this, in whom is the Spirit of God?") is marked as an interrogative by the most common way of marking these sentences in BH, the ה interrogative (see page 21). The particle appeared previously in the analysis of the interrogatives in 37:8 and 10 where we concluded that they are used as "rhetorical" in the sense that they are not seeking information. However, many different uses of the particle are recognised by grammarians (e.g. WO § 18.1.c - for questions of fact and alternative questions; Van der Merwe *et al.* § 43.2.1.ii - to mark yes/no question, double questions and indirect questions; GKC § 150 d - primarily before the simple question, when the questioner is wholly uncertain as to the answer to be expected, when a negative answer is expected, as a rhetorical). Thus, it is not possible at all to rely on the usage of the interrogative particle as evidence to identify the speech act (as we did with the interrogative introduced by אִיךָ in 39:9<sup>73</sup>) because its use is too broad. The LXX introduces the interrogative with the particle Μή, which is said to introduce questions that "expect a negative answer" in Greek (Wevers 1993:612).

Thus, the best clue we have in terms of finding out Pharaoh's speech act is contextual, the social position of speaker and hearer. Would the supreme authority in Egypt ask a question of his servants in a matter such as this? Is Pharaoh really seeking information from his servants? It is possible to argue that Pharaoh was seeking for advice when uttering the sentence (we know that there were advisers in the court proceedings in Israel – see 1 Kings 12:6ff and in Egypt<sup>74</sup>). However, the

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<sup>73</sup> It is very important to remember that although one can look for clues regarding a certain speech act in the usage of a certain word or expression (the way the speakers in BH use words and expressions), the usage of words or expression by themselves is not sufficient as a clue to find out a speech act, nor the kind of sentence. Thus, although the particle אִיךָ is generally used to pose questions where the speaker is facing an unreasonable situation, one can only know the speech act performed by use of the word or expression in its context; and, although interrogatives are usually used to pose questions, we have confirmed in many cases, that interrogatives may have a variety of functions.

<sup>74</sup> Personal contacts with Dr. I Cornelius.

lack of any sort of answer makes one think that he was probably not seeking advice. If this is true we have here the performance of an indirect speech act. The uttering of the interrogative, I believe, is to make a statement in front of his servants about what he thinks regarding Joseph ("There is no one else like this man"). Further evidence for this is the fact that no one could interpret his dreams but Joseph. Another question to be raised, however, is why someone in such a position uses an indirect speech act to make a statement? Is there a norm, a governing social principle by which an authority makes a statement by using an interrogative instead of a declarative? Is there a sociolinguistic principle behind the use of a question by someone in a position of authority to make a statement to hearers in an inferior position? One must remember that statements are classified as assertives (the illocutionary point of assertives is to commit the speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition). The speaker deliberately chooses to express his commitment to a certain truth (the speaker believes that) through an indirect way. One possible explanation is that although the speaker holds the authority to make the statement, he is using a principle of politeness whereby he allows the hearer to agree and feel at ease. Goody (1978:37) observes that in Gonja "superiors [people in a superior social status] use all the major interrogative modes [information-seeking questions, rhetorical questions, control questions and deference questions] as strategies in defining the basis on which they wish to interact with subordinates." Although principles of politeness are known to cover quite a universal spectrum of languages, these social observations are contemporary and the time/space frame is so distant from the time/space frame of the BH speaker setting that it is not wise to presuppose any similarities. Further studies are required in the area of sociolinguistics (ethnography) to find out how politeness is expressed in BH.

Thus, one can say that the interrogative in verse 38 is used as an indirect speech act to perform a statement.

### Genesis 42:1

The next pericope with an apparently unanswered interrogative is Genesis 42:1-5.

*Table 17 - Pericope: Genesis 42:1-5*

42.1 וַיֵּרָא יַעֲקֹב כִּי יֵשׁ-שָׁבֵר בְּמִצְרַיִם וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב לְבָנָיו לָמָּה תִּתְרָאוּ:	Narrative text followed by direct speech introduced by single verb frame - Interrogative
42.2 וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה שְׁמַעְתִּי כִּי יֵשׁ-שָׁבֵר בְּמִצְרַיִם רְדוֹ-שְׁמָה וְשִׁבְרוּ-לָנוּ מִשָּׂם וְנָחִיָּה וְלֹא נָמוּת:	Direct speech introduced by single verb frame - same character
42.3 וַיֵּרְדּוּ אֶחָד-יֹסֵף עֶשְׂרֵה לְשָׁבֵר בָּרַם מִמִּצְרַיִם:	Narrative
42.4 וְאֶת-בְּנֵימִין אֶחָד יֹסֵף לֹא-שָׁלַח יַעֲקֹב אֶת-אֶחָיו כִּי אָמַר פֶּן-יִקְרָאנוּ אֲסוֹן:	
42.5 וַיָּבֵאוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְשָׁבֵר בְּתוֹךְ הַבָּאִים כִּי-הָיָה הָרָעָב בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן:	

This interrogative (לָמָּה תִּתְרָאוּ: - "Why do you look at one another?") is introduced by the generic single verb frame "said" and is followed by another speech act by the same character. We found this same situation (interrogative followed by speech by the same character) in the analysis of 37:13, 26, 40:8 and 41:38. In 37:13 we concluded that the interrogative is used to make a statement; in 37:26 the interrogative is also used to make a statement (trying to convince the hearer of something) and as an introduction to a request of a future course of action; in 40:8 and 41:38 the interrogatives are used to make statements. However, all these interrogatives were marked by particles or question words that are different from the one that marks the interrogative in 42:1. This interrogative is marked by the question word לָמָּה (see page 33 for discussion of use and meaning). לָמָּה and מַדּוּעַ have apparently the same meaning (why?); however, according to Hyman (1987:173), "there are semantic differences" between them. Hyman argues that, based on the use of the two question words in Genesis, one can find these differences. Hyman's

findings are that מדוע is used for real questions (information-seeking) while למה is used for different purposes such as critical/corrective questions and in only one instance, due to particular circumstances, it is used as an information-seeking question. One caveat in Hyman's study, which he openly admits, is that his conclusions are based on the book of Genesis only, where only two interrogatives are introduced by מדוע, while 19 are introduced by למה. A decisive conclusion regarding the semantic differences between the two words can only be reached with further research.<sup>75</sup> That does not invalidate Hyman's conclusions regarding the use of למה in the book of Genesis. However, looking at other occurrences of למה in BH one finds that the question word is used for information-seeking questions; thus, the analysis by Hyman would only hold for the book of Genesis.<sup>76</sup>

Hyman's criteria for analysis, although seeking a solution for a semantic question, have a lot of pragmatic basis. He analyses the למה interrogatives in Genesis observing primarily what he calls "fielding", defined as "the way in which the respondent handles or treats the question (1987:173). In sum, Hyman looks for the function of interrogatives by observing what hearers do with them. His conclusion regarding the interrogative in 42:1 is that the interrogative is used to perform a critical corrective question. He points out as evidence for his conclusion the fact that the question is fielded with silence and followed by commands. In our analysis we will scrutinise Hyman's analysis.

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<sup>75</sup> The question word מדוע appears in 70 verses in BHS (Gen 26:27; 40:7; Ex 1:18; 2:18; 3:3; 5:14; 18:14; Lev 10:17; Num 12:8; 16:3; Jos 17:14; Jdg 5:28; 9:28; 11:7; 11:26; 12:1; Rut 2:10; 1 Sam 20:2; 20:27; 21:2; 2 Sam 3:7; 11:10; 11:20; 12:9; 13:4; 16:10; 18:11; 19:42; 19:44; 24:21; 1 Kgs 1:6; 1:13; 1:41; 2:43; 2 Kgs 4:23; 8:12; 9:11; 12:8; 2 Chron 24:6; Neh 2:2; 2:3; 13:11; 13:21; Est 3:3; Job 3:12; 18:3; 21:4; 21:7; 24:1; 33:13; Is 5:4; 50:2; 63:2; Jer 2:14; 2:31; 8:5; 8:19; 8:22; 12:1; 13:22; 14:19; 22:28; 26:9; 30:6; 32:3; 36:29; 46:5; 46:15; 49:1; Mal 2:10) and in many instances it has a critical/corrective tone (see Ex 5:14; Lev 10:17; Num 12:8; 16:3).

<sup>76</sup> למה occurs in 170 verses in BHS and a few examples show that it is used for information seeking questions and not only as critical/corrective ones (Jos 9:22; Jdg 15:10; 1 Sam 19:17; 28:15; 2 Sam 14:31; 19:26). We conclude below that למה interrogatives are used to make statements (47:15,19).



A new setting gives way to the pericope: a great famine (that Pharaoh dreamed and Joseph interpreted) comes and not only the Egyptians but other people from “all the earth came” to buy grain in Egypt (41:57). In verse 1 the narrator introduces the episode explaining that Jacob learned about the grain in Egypt. Following the narrator’s comment one finds the interrogative object of the analysis here.

To perform the analysis from a speech act theoretical point of view one must investigate the sequence of speech acts in the pericope. Looking at Table 17 one realises that the speech act has no pairing, viz. the same character continues the speech. It is possible, though, to argue that in this text we have a narrative response to the speech act. Verse 3 reads “So ten of Joseph’s brothers went down to buy grain in Egypt” following a command from their father in verse 2 - “Behold, I have heard that there is grain in Egypt; go down and buy grain for us there, that we may live, and not die.” The use of the sentence can be easily identified as a command because it fulfils all the conditions for them (see Table 14 - Comparing questions and requests, specially the comments on the requests side). Thus, we have an interrogative, used to perform a speech act that precedes another speech act, an order.

As we know, interrogatives are normally used to ask questions; but when the speaker himself does not provide an opportunity for an answer and the hearer does not attempt to answer, we have, most probably, an indication of an indirect speech act (Jacob is not seeking information). From a previous analysis where a similar situation occurred (37:13, 26 and 40:8) the interrogatives were used as introductions to directives (requests). I propose that the same happens here: the interrogative is used as an introduction to the command that follows. What makes this interrogative



different from the others is that in the previous ones we find a tone of politeness<sup>77</sup> while here one can find a tone of criticism and irony. Jacob's question as such is unanswerable: "Why do you look at each other? Do something!"

We observed in the analysis of other interrogatives that are used to criticise that it involves an expectation of the speaker (S wants H to do something - directive class), thus, the label of critical/corrective fits quite nicely the speech act performed by Jacob. Thus, Hyman's position regarding this interrogative is correct.

### Genesis 42:22

After Jacob's sons' arrival in Egypt, they came into the presence of Joseph, not knowing that the man in front of them was their brother. They were accused by Joseph of spying. They were sent into prison and after three days brought back into Joseph's presence. This false accusation was used as a pretext to make them bring Joseph's young brother, Benjamin, to him. While in Joseph's presence the brothers engage in a dialogue in which the apparently unanswered interrogative occurs (42:22).<sup>78</sup> The narrator indicates that they thought Joseph could not understand what they were saying because they had an interpreter between them (42:23).

Table 18 - Pericope: Genesis 42:21-24

42.21 וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל-אָחִיו אָכַל אֲשָׁמִים אָנַחְנוּ עַל-אָחִינוּ אֲשֶׁר רָאִינוּ צָרָת נַפְשׁוֹ בַּהֲתַחַנְנוּ אֵלָיו וְלֹא שָׁמְעָנוּ עַל-כֵּן בָּאָה אֵלָיו הַצָּרָה הַזֹּאת:	Direct speech introduced by single verb frame
42.22 וַיַּעַן רְאוּבֵן אֹתָם לֵאמֹר הֲלוֹא אָמַרְתִּי אֵלֵיכֶם לֵאמֹר אֶל-תַּחֲטְאוּ בִּילֵד וְלֹא שָׁמַעְתֶּם וְגַם-דָּמֹה הָיָה נִדְרִשׁ:	Direct speech introduced by <i>lēmôr</i> frame - Interrogative
42.23 וְהֵם לֹא יָדְעוּ כִּי שָׁמַע יוֹסֵף כִּי הַמְלִיץ בֵּינָתָם:	Narrative

<sup>77</sup> But see the remarks on page 112 about politeness.

<sup>78</sup> Westermann (1986:110) comments that with the introduction in verse 21 (וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל-אָחִיו) "the narrator wants to synthesize thereby the result of a long conversation between them."

42:24 וַיֹּסֶב מַעֲלֵיהֶם וַיִּכַּךְ וַיֵּשֶׁב אֱלֹהִים וַיִּדְבֹּר  
 אֱלֹהִים וַיִּקַּח מֵאֵתָם אֶת־שִׁמְעוֹן וַיֹּאסֶר אֹתוֹ  
 לְעֵינֵיהֶם:

The interrogative in verse 22 (הֲלוֹא אָמַרְתִּי אֲלֵיכֶם לֹא־תִחַטְּאוּ בְּיָלֶד) -- "Did I not tell you not to sin against the lad?" is marked by the particle הֲלוֹא which also marked the interrogatives in 37:13 and 41:38. In both cases the interrogatives were used to make a statement (indirect speech acts) rather than properly ask a question. Although the English ASV included the next sentence (וְלֹא שָׁמַעְתֶּם) in the interrogative ("Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear?") there is no reason for doing so. The reading in the RSV ("But you would not listen.") agrees with most translations and commentaries and renders, in my opinion, the BHS adequately.

Let us first deal with the verb that appears in the *lē'môr* verb frame (וַיַּעַן). According to BDB (page 772) עָנָה means "to answer, to respond." Other meanings are also attributed to the verb (see Miller 1992:261). עָנָה appears only 9 times in *lē'môr* frames in contrast to 70 times in multiple verb frames. Miller notes (1992:268-271) four different uses for the verb in *lē'môr* frames, one of which is the use of it in the introduction of the interrogative we are working with. She says regarding the frame in 42:22.<sup>79</sup>

A *lē'môr* frame may also be used when the adjacency pair within which it appears is an aside (or "side sequence") within a larger conversation ... Reuben's response is marked with *lē'môr* since it is not the most salient response within the larger conversation.

<sup>79</sup> Miller (1992:328 n 97) also states "In only one instance is the use of *lē'môr* with 'mr is syntactically required: the quotative frame in Genesis 42:22 has a question."

This pragmatic remark on the use of ענה in *lê'môr* frames is very important to our analysis in terms of explaining its pairing. Usually the verb ענה in multiple verb frames introduces a second pair-part in the prototypical dialogic paradigm (an appropriate response to a first pair-part), while here, as well as 41:16, it is marking a secondary remark in the sequence.

One must also realise that the introduction of the sentence with ענה does not mean strictly “to answer” a question but means a reaction to something that is happening, although not as the main response in the dialogue according to the pragmatic evaluation by Miller. Thus, the translation of the verb could be “responded” or even “reacted” although most English translations prefer “answered” (but see *LXX* - κρίνω - “to judge, to evaluate”; *NIV* - “replied”). The meaning of the verb and the way it is translated is essential to understand the speech act. The other way around, it is possible that in a case where one is not sure about how to translate a verb such as this one, that the speech act analysis may help in identifying the most adequate translation.

We have good reason to believe that this interrogative is not used in the speech to pose a question and that we are dealing with an indirect speech act. Firstly, as pointed out above, the pairing of the speech sequences does not indicate a situation where the speaker is looking for an answer or seeking information. The speaker continues the speech and the narration ends right after the turn. Secondly, there is no indication of a pragmatic or narrative response. Thus, the interrogative is not used to pose a question.

As in the two previous cases where הלא appeared it is likely that the interrogative is used here to make a statement (see Table 11 - Rules for STATEMENTS). First, both speaker and hearer know the “would-be answer” if the interrogative were posing a

question. The speaker did state that they should not sin against the lad and both speaker and hearer knew it. (37:21-22):

*But when Reuben heard it, he delivered him out of their hands, saying, "Let us not take his life." And Reuben said to them, "Shed no blood; cast him into this pit here in the wilderness, but lay no hand upon him" – that he might rescue him out of their hand, to restore him to his father.*

The sincerity rule holds since the speaker truly believes what he is stating, and finally, the essential condition also holds, as the implied proposition represents an actual state of affairs. In this case the statement serves to remind the hearer of a certain state of affairs. Thus, the direct speech could be represented as

And Reuben answered them, "Did I not tell you not to sin against the lad? But you would not listen. So now there comes a reckoning for his blood."

And Reuben answered them, "*I told you not to sin against the lad!* But you would not listen. So now there comes a reckoning for his blood."

In previous instances where the הלוֹא interrogative was used in similar circumstances, to make a statement, it had the function of introducing a request while here it seems to have the function of introducing a conclusive statement.

### Genesis 42:28

Briefly, the setting for this interrogative is as follows: Joseph sends his brothers back home without letting them know that he is their brother. He holds back Simeon to make sure that they will come back with Benjamin, the youngest of the brothers, all this under the pretence of testing the group's honesty. Joseph orders his servants to fill their sacks with grain and also to put back their money. During a stop in their trip back to the place where their father was, they discover the money in the sacks.

Table 19 - Pericope: Genesis 42:27-28

42.27 וַיִּפְתַּח הָאָחִיד אֶת־שָׁקוֹ לִתְתֹּמֶת מִסָּפֹא לְחִמְרוֹ בְּמִלּוֹן וַיֵּרָא אֶת־כֶּסֶּפוֹ וְהִנֵּה־הוּא בִּפִּי אֲמַתָּהָתוֹ׃	Narrative
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42.28 וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־אָחִיו הוֹשֵׁב בְּסֻפֵּי הַנָּהָר  
בְּאִמְתַּחֲתֵי וַיֵּצֵא לָבָם וַיַּחֲרְדּוּ אִישׁ אֶל־אָחִיו  
לֵאמֹר מִה־נָּעַת עָשָׂה אֱלֹהִים לָנוּ:

Direct speech introduced by single  
verb frame - Narrative - Direct  
speech introduced by *lê'môr* frame

This apparently unanswered interrogative occurs in a pericope where two direct speeches are present intervened by a narration. Although interrupted by narration, the text can be considered a dialogue, where, in the same setting the group of hearers react with speech and action to a first speaker's statement. The intervening narration explains the psychological state of the whole group (וַיֵּצֵא לָבָם - "At this their hearts failed them"). The *lê'môr* frame also contains a verb expressing the psychological state of the group (וַיַּחֲרְדּוּ אִישׁ אֶל־אָחִיו לֵאמֹר - "and they turned trembling to one another, saying"). With this psychological expression the narrator introduces the interrogative (מִה־נָּעַת עָשָׂה אֱלֹהִים לָנוּ: - "What is this that God has done to us?").

The interrogative as such is marked by the question word *מה* which is discussed on page 28ff. The demonstrative *זאת* is explained by WO (§ 18.3.b) as to "add vividness". Van der Merwe *et al.* (§ 43.3.2.i) explain that "The question sometimes acquires emotional weight by the addition of *זה* or *זאת*." One further problem with the description of the interrogative is that it is regarded by some as an exclamation instead of interrogative (see Westermann 1986:112 and Keil & Delitzsch 1976:358 - examples of *מה* sentences as exclamations are in page 31ff.). Although it does not figure in Table 3 - Alleged exclamative use of the particle *ה* - and most English translations translate the sentence as an interrogative, commentators suggest that it is in fact an exclamation. The translation as an exclamation makes sense if one can establish that the speech act performed in the utterance of the interrogative is a statement and not a real question.

We know by the speech frame that the characters were talking to each other and, apparently, were very disoriented (taken by puzzlement and confusion in face of the unexpected). One must remember that the same group was already charged with spying in/on Egypt, and now, most probably, that would lead to a charge of theft. One must also remember that the same group concluded that the first charge against them was a “pay back” for their actions regarding Joseph (see 42:21-22). Now, something as bad as the first situation happens and those conclusions at which they arrived earlier come to their minds and prompt the characters to express a similar conclusion.

There is no way to certify that this is the setting the narrator had in mind when he expressed the characters’ puzzlement; however, assuming it was by the clues we find in the text, it is then easy to disregard the interrogative as a real information-seeking question of the type “what” because they had already concluded what God was doing to them (which is the only possible explanation in their minds). The essential condition for questions does not hold for this type of question (S wants information). Thus, we are dealing with an indirect speech act. Most probably, the speaker is in this case performing more than one speech act: first, stating the speaker’s belief (God is doing something to us = punishing) and, second, asking “why”.

- The first speech falls in the assertive category: preparatory, sincerity and essential rules for statements (page 90) hold regarding this speech utterance. From the context we know that the speakers have reasons to believe in the fact they are expressing; it is not obvious that all of them reached the same conclusion at that moment; the speaker believes that what he states is true. A simple statement, however, would not be sufficient to express to puzzlement of the speaker and that is most probably why the interrogative form is used.
- The other falls in the category directive, seeking an explanation from the hearer.



Looking at other examples of the string *מה זאת* reveals that this is a general use for the expression in BH. Out of 11 occurrences only one (Ex 13:14) is used for a real information-seeking question; all others are followed by a form of the root *עשה*<sup>80</sup> in a situation where the speaker already knows the answer to the “what” question and expects some sort of explanation from the hearer (if one takes the face value of the expression - *מה זאת* – “what is this?”, we cannot regard the function of the sentence as a real information-seeking question). Thus, a “why” question is a possibility here (“Why is God doing this to us?”). Due to the situation in which these interrogatives occur it is also possible to argue that criticism is involved; thus, a third speech act is involved. A quick review of some of the texts may clarify the argument:

Gen 3:13 Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent beguiled me, and I ate.”

Then the LORD God said to the woman, “You have eaten of the tree! *Why* you have done this?” The woman said, “*Because* the serpent beguiled me, I ate.”

- The speaker already knows the answer to the question (verse 12).
- The speaker continues the speech with a “Why?” question.
- The hearer does not have the opportunity to answer “I did this” or “I did not do anything.” The hearer gives an explanation.
- The speaker has reasons to criticise the hearer for disobeying a clear command.

Gen 12:18 So Pharaoh called Abram, and said, “What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife?”

So Pharaoh called Abram, and said, “*Why* you have done this to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife?”

- The speaker already knows the answer to the question.
- The speaker continues the speech with a critical/corrective “Why?” question.
- The speaker has reasons to criticise the hearer's deceitful attitude.

Gen 26:10 Abimelech said, “What is this you have done to us? One of the people might easily have lain with your wife, and you would have brought guilt upon us.”

Abimelech said, “You have deceived us! *Why?*” One of the people might easily have lain with your wife, and you would have brought guilt upon us.”

<sup>80</sup> Gen 3:13; 12:18; 26:10; 29:25; 42:28; Ex 14:5; 14:11; Jdg 2:2; 15:11; Jon 1:10.



- The speaker already knows the answer to the question.
- The speaker continues speaking.
- The speaker has reasons to criticise the hearer.

Gen 29:25 And in the morning, behold, it was Leah; and Jacob said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? Did I not serve with you for Rachel? Why then have you deceived me?"

And in the morning, behold, it was Leah; and Jacob said to Laban, "*Why* have you done this to me? Did I not serve with you for Rachel? You have deceived me! *Why?*"

- The speaker already knows the answer to the question.
- The speaker continues the speech.
- The speaker has reasons to criticise the hearer.

Exodus 14:5 When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, the mind of Pharaoh and his servants was changed toward the people, and they said, "What is this we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us?"

When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, the mind of Pharaoh and his servants was changed toward the people, and they said, "*Why* have we let Israel go from serving us?"

- The speech is choral and represents the group feelings towards themselves.
- It may represent self-criticism.

Column 1 shows the translation from RSV and column 2 a possible translation with "Why?". Note that the translation in RSV is consistent - "What is this...?" In all texts above and also the remaining examples listed in footnote 80 the speaker already knows the answer for the "What?" question. In some cases the speaker states that he knows the answer while in other cases it is clearly implied in the text or context. In none of the examples the hearer presents an answer to the "What?" question but in some of them we find an explanation, implying that the hearer feels that he/she must answer a "Why?" question. In a few examples the speaker actually continues the discourse with a "Why?" question. Although in most examples the question is from a speaker in a position of authority over the hearer, the pattern is not consistent (see Gen 29:25 - Jacob/Laban; Ex 14:11 - People/Moses). The interrogative in our sample text presents the brothers speaking to each other while the subject of the question is God. Since the object of the question is a third character, not present, it

might be that criticism is not involved. They acknowledge in their speech God's involvement in the happening.

To sum up the findings about the interrogative in 42:28, one may say that the utterance is used by the speaker to perform two different speech acts simultaneously: to make a clear statement of the kind "I know" and to seek an explanation as to why something was done.

The use of the expression **מֵה זֹאת**<sup>81</sup> plus a form of the root **עשה** seems to be a speech act "formula"<sup>82</sup> where the speaker performs more than one speech act, making a clear statement about a state of affairs and seeking an explanation. When the hearer is also the one that performed or performs the action expressed in the context by the verb **עשה**, a third speech act maybe involved: criticism.

### **Genesis 43:6 and 7**

The setting of the pericope is as follows: the grain that Joseph's brothers brought from Egypt was finished and the famine was still severe in the land. Jacob ordered them to go back and buy more grain in Egypt; the brothers argued that they could not go back without Benjamin because that was a clear threat to their lives if they did.

The dialogue in which the unanswered interrogative occurs (verse 7) starts in verse 2 with a first adjacency pair (2/3-5); it is followed by a second pair in verses 6/7 and ends with a third pair in verses 9-10/11-14. However, the apparently unanswered interrogative is not the only interrogative in the dialogue. Therefore we will also deal here with the interrogative in verse 6.

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<sup>81</sup> Note that similar principles do not fit to the use of **מֵה זֶה**.

<sup>82</sup> The idea of a 'formula' in speech acts might seem contradictory to the idea of speech act theory itself because it presuppose that there is no one-to-one relationship between the form and the function of expressions. However, one must remember that we are dealing with a fixed corpus of

Table 20 - Pericope: Genesis 43:1-7

43.1 וַהֲרַעַב כָּבֵד בְּאֶרֶץ־	Narrative
43.2 וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר כָּלוּ לֶאֱכֹל אֶת־הַשֶּׁבֶר אֲשֶׁר הֵבִיאוּ מִמִּצְרָיִם וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם אֲבִיהֶם שִׁבוּ שָׁבוּ־לָנוּ מֵעַט־אֲכֹל־	Narrative - Direct speech introduced by single verb frame
43.3 וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיוּ יְהוּדָה לֵאמֹר הֲעַד הָעַד בָּנוּ הָאִישׁ לֵאמֹר לֹא־תֵרָאוּ פָנַי בְּלִתִּי אֲחֵיכֶם אִתְּכֶם־	Direct speech introduced by <i>lē'môr</i> frame
43.4 אִם־יִשָּׁן מִשְׁלַח אֶת־אֲחִינוּ אֲתָנוּ גֵרָדָה וְנִשְׁפָּרָה לָךְ אֲכֹל־	
43.5 וְאִם־אֵינָהּ מִשְׁלַח לֹא גֵרָדָה כִּי־הָאִישׁ אָמַר אֲלֵינוּ לֹא־תֵרָאוּ פָנַי בְּלִתִּי אֲחֵיכֶם אִתְּכֶם־	
43.6 וַיֹּאמֶר יִשְׂרָאֵל לְמָה הֲרַעַתֶּם לִי לְהַגִּיד לְאִישׁ הָעוֹד לָכֶם אָח־	Direct speech introduced by single verb frame - interrogative
43.7 וַיֹּאמְרוּ שְׂאוֹל שְׂאֹל־הָאִישׁ לָנוּ וְלְמוֹלְדֹתָנוּ לֵאמֹר הָעוֹד אֲבִיכֶם חַי הֵיטָ לָכֶם אָח וְנִגְד־לֹ	Direct speech introduced by single verb frame - choral - interrogative
עַל־פִּי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה הִידְוֹעַ גִּדַּע כִּי יֹאמֶר הוֹרִידוּ אֶת־אֲחֵיכֶם־	
43.8 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוּדָה אֶל־יִשְׂרָאֵל אָבִיו שְׁלַחָה הַנֶּעֱר אִתִּי וְנִקְוָמָה וְנִלְכָּה וְנִחְיָה וְלֹא נָמוּת גַּם־אֲנִחנוּ גַּם־אֶתָּה גַּם־טַפְנוּ־	Direct speech introduced by single verb frame
43.9 אָנֹכִי אֶעֱרָכֶנוּ מִיָּדִי תִבְקָשׁנוּ אִם־לֹא הֵבִיאתִיו אֵלַיִךְ וְהִצַּגְתִּיו לְפָנֶיךָ וְחָטָאתִי לָךְ כָּל־הַיָּמִים־	
43.10 כִּי לֹא־הִתְמַהֵּמְנוּ כִּי־עָתָה שָׁבוּנוּ זֶה פַּעַמִּים־	Dialogue continues

The interrogative in verse 6: לְמָה הֲרַעַתֶּם לִי לְהַגִּיד לְאִישׁ הָעוֹד לָכֶם אָח־ is marked as such by the question word למה, discussed previously on page 33 and also in the description of the interrogative sentence in 42:1. The syntax of this sentence, however, is more complex than the previous one as the nominal sentence הָעוֹד לָכֶם אָח is also marked by the interrogative particle ה. Grammars point out to this construction as an indirect question (See GKC § 150 i n3, Joüon-Muraoka § 161.f n1; also Westermann 1986:117). Translating the marked infinitive construct לְהַגִּיד as "by telling" and the ה "whether" we have the translation "Why did you treat me so badly *by telling* the man *whether* you still had *another* brother?". One should

remember, however, that in BH indirect and direct questions are not syntactically distinct.<sup>83</sup>

We observed earlier that Hyman (1987) defends the hypothesis that למה interrogatives in Genesis are not used as information seeking questions but as critical/corrective questions. His argument seems to prove correct regarding this interrogative. Although the interrogative is paired with an answer, the answer does not give a reason to a specific “why?” question – it is not a “Why?”/Because pair. The brothers do not answer “Why they treat their father badly” but justify their actions by answering the indirect question embedded in the direct critical/corrective one. Thus, the brother’s answer answers the question “Why did you tell the man that you had another brother?” From the speaker’s perspective, that was treating him badly.

Thus, the speaker is not seeking information, but criticising the hearer. We pointed out before that criticism falls in the category of directives (the speaker wants the hearer to do something, a change of attitude, to express an apology, etc.). That the interrogative is used as a criticism can be further confirmed by the hearer’s reaction in the second pair part of the adjacency pair (verse 7).

Joseph’s brothers react with an explanation that sounds like a denial. They start by explaining that Pharaoh “explicitly” or “directly” (note the use of the infinite absolute plus perfect - שָׂאָל שְׂאָל<sup>84</sup>) inquired from them about their family and then quote his interrogatives - הֲעוֹד אֲבִיכֶם חַי הָיִשׁ לָכֶם אָח - (which are in direct form here in contrast

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in the fixed corpus of literature that we have are consistent we can now call it a formula.

<sup>83</sup> הֲעוֹד occurs 10 times in BHS; and except for this verse and Ex 4:18, always in direct questions (Gen 31:14, 43:7, 27, 45:3, 1 Kgs 20:32, Rut 1:11, Am 6:10, Hag 2:19).

<sup>84</sup> The quotative frame שָׂאָל שְׂאָל-הָאִישׁ לָנוּ וּלְמִוְלָדֵינוּ לְאִמֵּר does not conform to what Miller calls “prototypical dialogic ideal” because the sentences are a retelling of a dialogue that happened in the past. The prototypical dialogic ideal of *le’mor* frames with שָׂעַל is to occur in the first pair part and paired with a spoken response. The prototypical dialogic ideal also diverges in this kind of frame when we have a “prop in the narrative rather than a full character” which is the case in this choral speech (see Miller 1992:304).

to the embedded interrogative inverse 6). Obviously these two interrogatives are posed here as real information-seeking questions in a retold dialogue and used to explain the situation. That is also why they are not followed by an answer but explained in the next sentence - "What we told him was in answer to these questions."

Following that, Joseph's brothers utter another interrogative sentence, marked by the particle ה (הֲיִדְוֶנָּה נִלְכֶּה כִּי יֹאמַר הוֹרִידוּ אֶת־אֶחָיִכֶּם). This interrogative is not followed by an apparent answer. The next sentence belongs to another pair where Judah pledges his personal care over the boy (Benjamin) during their trip to Egypt; to that Jacob agrees because he had no other option. Thus, we have an interrogative uttered in the end of an adjacency pair implying that the interrogative is not used to pose an information-seeking question but to perform another kind of speech act. One can easily see that the utterance does not conform to Searle's rules for questions. The speaker is not seeking information but somehow giving information. Similarly to the interrogatives in 37:8 and 10, the sentence is introduced by ה interrogative plus infinite absolute plus imperfect (see footnote 59). In those cases the interrogatives were used to criticise the hearer. In this case the interrogative is used in reaction to criticism and we may call it a rebuttal, an answer to criticism instead of accepting it (the case of 37:8 and 10). I suggest that the interrogative is here used to make a statement that in direct form would read something like "We had no way of knowing that the man was going to order us to bring our brother to Egypt!" Notice that, by not accepting the criticism, the speaker expects a change in the hearer. These conclusions agree with Hyman's conclusions (1987:173-183).

The investigation of the interrogative above helps one to see how one speech act may prompt different reactions to it. In the preceding analysis of interrogatives that were used to criticise we found the hearers responding with silence (37:8, 10; 42:1).



Here we find the hearer responding with a rebuttal, making a statement to refute criticism using the interrogative form. Observing the use of the string

ה interrogative (sometimes הלא) + infinite absolute + [perfect or imperfect or participle] of the same verbal root of the infinite absolute

one notices that it is frequently used to perform indirect speech acts, usually criticism.<sup>85</sup>

### Genesis 43:27 and 29

In the pericope below one finds three interrogatives. The first two occur in the adjacency pair in verses 27/28 and are apparently “normal” questions (information-seeking); the third one occurs in the sequence of the discourse and it is apparently without an answer (it is not in a regular adjacency pair). It seems better to deal with these interrogatives in the same section since they are in a single stretch of discourse and belong to subsequent adjacency pairs.

Table 21 - Pericope: Genesis 43:26-34

43.26 וַיִּבֹּא יוֹסֵף הַכְּתִיָּה וַיִּבְיֹאוּ לוֹ אֶת-הַמִּנְחָה אֲשֶׁר-בָּיְדָם הַכְּתִיָּה וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ-לוֹ אַרְצָה:	Narrative
43.27 וַיִּשְׁאַל לָהֶם לְשָׁלוֹם וַיֹּאמֶר הַשָּׁלוֹם אֲבִיכֶם הַזֶּקֶן אֲשֶׁר אָמַרְתֶּם הַעֲוֹדְנוּ תִּי:	Direct speech introduced by multiple verb frame - interrogative
43.28 וַיֹּאמְרוּ שָׁלוֹם לַעֲבָדֶיךָ לְאֲבִינוּ עֹדְנֵנוּ תִּי וַיִּקְרֹךְ וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ יְיָ וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ:	Direct speech introduced by single verb frame - narrative
43.29 וַיִּשָּׂא עֵינָיו וַיֵּרָא אֶת-בְּנֵימִין אָחִיר בֶּן-אָמֹן וַיֹּאמֶר הִזֶּה אַחִיכֶם הַקָּטָן אֲשֶׁר אָמַרְתֶּם אֵלַי וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יַחַנֵּן בְּנִי:	Narrative - direct speech introduced by single verb frame - interrogative - direct speech introduced by single verb frame - same character
43.30 וַיִּמָּהַר יוֹסֵף כִּי-נִכְמְרוּ רַחֲמָיו אֶל-אָחִיו וַיִּבְקֹשׁ לְבִכּוֹת וַיִּבֹּא הַחֲדָרָה וַיִּבֶכֶּ שָׁמָּה:	Narrative
43.31 וַיִּרְחֹץ פָּנָיו וַיֵּצֵא וַיִּתְאַפֵּק וַיֹּאמֶר שִׁימוּ לָחֶם 43.32 וַיִּשְׁימוּ לוֹ לִבְדּוֹ וּלְהֶם לִבְדָּם וּלְמַצֹּרִים הָאֲכָלִים אֹתוֹ לִבְדָּם כִּי לֹא יִכְלֹון הַמַּצֹּרִים לֶאֱכֹל אֶת-הָעֵבְרִים לָחֶם כִּי-תֹעֲבָה הוּא לְמַצֹּרִים:	Narrative followed by direct speech introduced by multiple verb frame Narrative

<sup>85</sup> Gen 37:8, 10, Num 22:37, 38, Jdg 11:25 (2), 1 Sam 2:27, Is 50:2, 58:7, Jer 3:1, 13:12, 14:19, 38:15, 40:14, Zec 7:5, 2 Chron 32:13.

43.33 וַיִּשְׁכְּבוּ לְפָנָיו הַבָּכָר כִּבְכָרְתּוֹ וְהַצֶּעִיר כָּצַעְרְתּוֹ וַיִּתְמְהוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים אִישׁ אֶל־רֵעֵהוּ:	Narrative
43.34 וַיֵּשָׂא מִשְׁאֵת מֵאֵת מִשְׁאֵת וַתֵּרָב מִשְׁאֵת בְּנִימָן מִמִּשְׁאֵת כָּלָם חֲמֵשׁ יָדוֹת וַיִּשְׁתּוּ וַיִּשְׁכְּרוּ עִמּוֹ:	Narrative

The interrogatives in verse 27 are clearly marked as such by interrogative particle הֲ -  
 - הֲשָׁלוֹם אָבִיכֶם הַזֶּקֶן אֲשֶׁר אָמַרְתֶּם - ("Is your father well, the old man of whom you  
 spoke?") - הֲעוֹדָנוּ חַיִּי - ("Is he still alive?") and both can be identified as real questions.  
 The speaker wants the information and, as the narration shows, receives it promptly  
 (verse 28). Interesting, though, is the multiple verb frame that introduces the  
 interrogatives - וַיִּשְׁאַל לָהֶם לְשָׁלוֹם וַיֹּאמֶר - lit. "He asked them to peace and said".  
 According to Miller (1992:303) this is the only instance where the verb שָׁאל means to  
 greet.<sup>86</sup> According to Westermann (1986:125) the expression means that he asks  
 "about their peace" in a way of greeting that is familiar to that time. In Exodus 18:7  
 one finds וַיִּשְׁאַלוּ אִישׁ־לְרֵעֵהוּ לְשָׁלוֹם - "and they asked each other of their welfare,"  
 (also 1 Chronicles 18:10) where one enquires about someone's welfare, implying  
 that they greeted each other. Thus, the speech following the frame is a way of  
 greeting, by asking someone about their own welfare or someone's else welfare.  
 LXX translates the expression as "How are you?" implying a greeting followed by  
 questions. Unfortunately this is the only example of this kind in BH. After the verbal  
 answer to the questions posed by Joseph, the brothers greet him back by bowing  
 down their heads and making obeisance. This pragmatic response confirms that the  
 first speech act is an act of greeting.

<sup>86</sup> Miller's comment seems to stretch the meaning of the word too much. The way of greeting is by asking questions - "How are you?", "How are you doing?" The same applies to BH: the speaker 'asks' about someone's well-being -- מִה שְׁלָמָךְ. Several passages illustrate this clearly: 2 Sam 18:32; 2 Kgs 4:26; 5:21; 9:11, etc.



After receiving the answer to the question/greeting in verse 27 Joseph includes another interrogative in his speech, which seems to be another real question **הֲזֶה אֶחֱיִיכֶם הַקָּטָן אֲשֶׁר אָמַרְתֶּם אֵלַי** – “Is this your youngest brother, of whom you spoke to me?” Although the interrogative is not paired with speech, silence seems to be the answer to the question (a pragmatic response that is omitted may be just a nodding of heads or even real silence). In two different circumstances this presupposition holds: if one assumes that Joseph could not recognise his younger brother, then he is really asking the others a question and expecting an answer from them, which is given somehow because he then continues and greets the younger brother; if one assumes that Joseph recognises his young brother, he still has to pose the question in order to keep his disguise. In both cases the rules for questions hold, although in the second situation there is a twist because he already knows the answer (S does not know the answer - a flaw in the preparatory rule). One might argue that this second option seems a stronger possibility because of the way the narrator puts the text: “And he looked up and saw Benjamin his brother, son of his mother, and said” thus indicating that Joseph recognised his younger brother; besides that, the narrative makes explicit that Joseph wants to keep his identity secret because when he is overcome by tears he runs from his brothers’ presence in order to keep his disguise.

Thus, although without a verbal response, the interrogative poses a real information-seeking question as in 37:30 and 42:28. In these three cases the possibility of a pragmatic response allowed for the conclusion that the interrogatives were used as information-seeking questions.

#### **Genesis 44:4, 5, 7 and 8**

The pericope is a follow-up to the pericope we analysed above and the setting continues Joseph’s plot and disguise: he tells one of his servants to put the money

back once again into his brothers' sacks as well as his silver cup in Benjamin's sack. He then instructs his servant to follow his brothers and ask questions that were to incriminate them once again.

Table 22 - Pericope: Genesis 44:3-10

44.3 הבקר אור והאנשים שלחו המה וחמריהם:	Narrative
44.4 הם יצאו את-העיר לא הרחיקו ויוסף אמר לאשר על-ביתו קום רדף אחרי האנשים והשגתם ואמרת אליהם למה שלמתם רעה תחת טובה? <sup>87</sup>	Narrative - Direct speech introduced by single verb frame - Interrogative
44.5 הלוא זה אשר ישתה אדני בו והוא נחש ינחש בו הרעתם אשר עשיתם:	Continue direct speech - Interrogative
44.6 וישגם וידבר אליהם את-הדברים האלה:	Narrative
44.7 ויאמרו אליו למה ידבר אדני בדברים האלה חלילה לעבדיך מעשות כדבר הזה:	Direct speech introduced by single verb frame - choral - Interrogatives
44.8 הן כסף אשר מצאנו בפי אמתחתינו השיבנו אליו מארז כנען ואין נגנב מבית אדניך כסף או זהב:	Continue direct speech - interrogative
44.9 אשר ימצא אתו מעבדיך ומת וגם-אנחנו נהיה לאדני לעבדים:	Continue direct speech
44.10 ויאמר גם-עתה כדבריהם כן-הוא אשר ימצא אתו יהיה לי עבד ואתם תהיו נקיים:	Direct speech introduced by single verb frame

The first two interrogatives (verse 4 – למה שלמתם רעה תחת טובה – “Why have you returned evil for good?”; verse 5 – הלוא זה אשר ישתה אדני בו והוא נחש ינחש בו – “Is it not from this that my lord drinks, and by this that he divines?”) are given as instructions to Joseph’s servant. He should repeat them before the party that left early in the morning. The text tells us that he followed them, overtook them and repeated Joseph’s words. Thus, we may assume that the set of questions spoken by Joseph was repeated in the presence of the brothers. One difficulty arises in the construction of the second interrogative and that is most probably the reason why LXX inserts the text - ἵνα τί ἐκλέψατέ μου τὸ κόνδυ τὸ ἀργυροῦν – “Why

<sup>87</sup> LXX inserts “Why have you stolen my silver cup?” which many translations adopt (RSV, New Revised Standard Version, Lutherbibel 1984, Elberfelder Bibel revidierte Fassung 1993).

have you stolen my silver cup?" in the beginning of verse 5. The demonstrative **זֶה** needs a referent which would be the "silver cup". The *LXX* reading is difficult because it uses the pronoun **μου** and it is not Joseph himself that is going to pose the question but the servant. The speech is a direct instruction (**וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם**); thus the sentence should be "Why have you stolen my Lord's silver cup?"

If a correction is to be preferred the Targum (**ט**<sup>p</sup>) insertion **הַגִּבִּיעַ** (the cup) after the demonstrative makes the text clear ("Is it not this the cup that my lord drinks from...?"). However, it is possible that no insertion is necessary at all. Since in a previous verse (44:2) the cup was already mentioned to the servant who put it in the sack, it can be completely omitted in the instructions, while it was necessary to be mentioned in the actual dialogue between the servant and brothers. We may assume that because in the reaction of the brothers one finds a mention of "silver".

Thus, we do not have the interrogatives as they were used, although we have a reaction to them. That may help us understand the intended speech act in the words of Joseph. We know by the plot of the narrative that Joseph's intentions were to maintain the disguise he adopted earlier: he did not want them to recognise him and he did want to keep his younger brother by his side. Thus the overtaking of the party on the road was again to bring false charges against them. To accomplish that the servant was instructed to speak as if he were disappointed. We already know that interrogatives introduced by **למה** can be used to criticise the hearer (42:1; 43:6) and **הלוא** interrogatives used to make statements (37:13; 40:8; 42:22). The **למה** interrogative introduces the criticism (a directive) while the **הלוא** interrogative is used to strengthen it by making a statement about the importance of the object supposedly stolen. The speaker then concludes the speech with a direct statement

confirming the function of the previous interrogatives - "You have done wrong in so doing." The speaker was not seeking any information from the hearer but making a statement as he was instructed to do.

Verses 7 to 9 are the brothers' response in choral speech. One can consider this response as second pair part of an adjacency pair. To represent it we could divide the text as follows:

Verse 4 and 5	instruction to criticise
Verse 6	First pair part - criticism (omitted in the narrative)
Verse 7 to 9	Second pair part - counter-criticise / challenge <sup>88</sup>
Verse 10	Challenge accepted

How is the counter-criticism posed? It starts with another למה interrogative - למה ידבר אדני בדברים האלה - "Why does my lord speak such words as these?" It is clear from the pairing that the speaker is not expecting an answer from the hearer but denying the false accusation: the speaker continues the dialogue with a statement that clearly denies it. The whole situation does not make any sense to the hearer to the point that a challenge is necessary. The speaker introduces it with an איך interrogative in a similar fashion as the challenge posed by Joseph in 39:9 (something unreasonable is been said about the speaker). Observe that in both instances the איך interrogative questions the possibility of the speaker performing some sort of action. Thus, this interrogative is used to pose the final denial - "We did not do such a thing as stealing!" The speaker so much believes in the truth of his statement that he challenges Joseph's servant to find the object on account of which they are accused and proposes a severe penalty if it could be found.

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<sup>88</sup> This terminology 'counter-criticise / challenge' is from Hyman (1987:181).

Thus, one finds here interrogatives that are used in reaction to a criticism. These interrogatives indicate denial and challenge.

### Genesis 44:15, 16, 19 and 34

After the episode in which the silver goblet was found in Benjamin's sack, Joseph's brothers are brought back to the city, to Joseph's house. The narrative is introduced with the sentence "and Joseph was still there" giving the idea that he was actually waiting for them. When they come to his presence they "fell to ground before him." Joseph introduces the first adjacency pair of the dialogue in verse 15 which pairs with verse 16. The dialogue continues with another pair comprising verses 17/18-34.

Table 23 - Pericope: Genesis 44:14-34

44.14 וַיָּבֹא יְהוּדָה וְאָחִיו בֵּיתָה יוֹסֵף וְהוּא עוֹדְנוּ שָׁם וַיִּפְּלוּ לִפְנֵי אֶרְצָה:	Narrative
44.15 וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם יוֹסֵף מַה-הַמַּעֲשֶׂה הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר עֲשִׂיתֶם הֲלוֹא יָדַעְתֶּם כִּי-נִחַשׁ יִנְתָּשׁ אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר כְּמִנִּי:	Direct speech introduced by single verb frame - Interrogatives
44.16 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוּדָה מַה-נֹּאמַר לְאָדֹנִי מִה-נִּדְבָר וּמִה-נִּצְטַדֵּק הָאֱלֹהִים מִצָּא אֶת-עֹנֵן עֲבָדֶיךָ הִנֵּנוּ עֲבָדִים לְאָדֹנִי גַם-אֲנֹחֲנוּ גַם אֲשֶׁר-נִמְצָא הַגִּבִּיעַ בְּיָדִי:	Direct speech introduced by single verb frame - Interrogatives
44.17 וַיֹּאמֶר חֲלִילָה לִּי מַעֲשֹׂת זֹאת הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר נִמְצָא הַגִּבִּיעַ בְּיָדִי הוּא יְהִי-לִּי עֶבֶד וְאַתֶּם עָלוּ לְשָׁלוֹם אֶל-אֲבִיכֶם כִּי:	Direct speech introduced by single verb frame
44.18 וַיִּגֹּשׁ אֵלָיו יְהוּדָה וַיֹּאמֶר כִּי אָדֹנִי יִדְבָּר-נָא עִבְדְּךָ דָּבָר בְּאָזְנִי אָדֹנִי וְאֶל-יָחִיד אָפֹךְ בְּעִבְדְּךָ כִּי כְמוֹד כְּפָרְעָה:	Direct speech introduced by single verb frame - continues to verse 34
44.19 אָדֹנִי שְׂאֵל אֶת-עֲבָדֶיךָ לֵאמֹר הִישָׁלְכֶם אֵב אוֹ-אָח:	Retelling - Embedded direct speech introduced by multiple verb frame - interrogative
44.20 וַנֹּאמֶר אֶל-אָדֹנִי יֵשׁ-לָנוּ אֵב זָקֵן וְיִלְד זָקֵנִים קָטָן וְאָחִיו מֵת וַיִּנְתָּר הוּא לְבָדֹךְ לְאִמּוֹ וְאָבִיו אֶהְבֹּךְ:	Embedded direct speech introduced by single verb frame
44.21 וַתֹּאמֶר אֶל-עֲבָדֶיךָ הוֹרְדֵהוּ אֵלָי וְאֲשִׁימָה עֵינַי עָלָיו:	Embedded direct speech introduced by single verb frame
44.22 וַנֹּאמֶר אֶל-אָדֹנִי לֹא-יִוָּכַל הַנֶּעַר לַעֲזֹב אֶת-אָבִיו וְעֹזֵב אֶת-אָבִיו וְמֵת:	Embedded direct speech introduced by single verb frame
44.23 וַתֹּאמֶר אֶל-עֲבָדֶיךָ אִם-לֹא יִרְדַּ אֲחִיכֶם הַקָּטָן אֲתִכֶּם לֹא תִסְפְּנוּ לִרְאוֹת פָּנָי:	Embedded direct speech introduced by single verb frame



44.24 וַיְהִי כִּי עָלִינוּ אֶל-עֶבְדְּךָ אָבִי וַנְּגַד-לוֹ אֶת דְּבָרֵי אֲדֹנָי:	Embedded narrative
44.25 וַיֹּאמֶר אָבִינוּ שָׁבוּ שְׁכְרוּ-לָנוּ מַעַט-אֶכֶל:	Embedded direct speech introduced by single verb frame
44.26 וַנֹּאמֶר לֹא נוּכַל לָרֶדֶת אִם-יֵשׁ אֲחִינוּ הַקָּטָן אִתָּנוּ וַיִּרְדְּנוּ כִּי-לֹא נוּכַל לָרְאוֹת פְּנֵי הָאִישׁ וְאֲחִינוּ הַקָּטָן אֵינָנו אִתָּנוּ:	Embedded direct speech introduced by single verb frame
44.27 וַיֹּאמֶר עֶבְדְּךָ אָבִי אֵלֵינוּ אַתֶּם יֹדְעִים כִּי שְׁנַיִם יְלִדָה-לִּי אֵשֶׁתִּי:	Embedded direct speech introduced by single verb frame
44.28 וַיַּצֵּא הָאֶחָד מֵאִתִּי וְאָמַר אֵן טָרַף טָרַף וְלֹא רָאִיתִי עַד-הַנָּה:	Continues from previous verse Finishes retelling
44.29 וּלְקַחְתֶּם גַּם-אֶת-נָה מִעַם פְּנֵי וְקָרְהוּ אֶסְיוֹן וְהוֹרִדְתֶּם אֶת-שִׁיבְתִּי בְּרֻעָה שְׂאֵלָה:	Continues direct speech from verse 16
44.30 וַעֲתָה כְּבֹאִי אֶל-עֶבְדְּךָ אָבִי וְהַנְּעַר אֵינָנו אִתָּנוּ וְנַפְשׁוֹ קְשׁוּרָה בְּנַפְשׁוֹ:	
44.31 וְהִיָּה כְּרֹאוֹתוֹ כִּי-אֵין הַנְּעַר וּמָת וְהוֹלִידוּ עֶבְדֶּיךָ אֶת-שִׁיבְתִּי עֶבְדְּךָ אָבִינוּ בִּיגּוֹן שְׂאֵלָה:	
44.32 כִּי עֶבְדְּךָ עָרַב אֶת-הַנְּעַר מִעַם אָבִי לֵאמֹר אִם-לֹא אָבִיאָנוּ אֵלֶיךָ וְחֻטְאִתִּי לְאָבִי כָּל-הַיָּמִים:	
44.33 וַעֲתָה יִשָּׁב-גַּא עֶבְדְּךָ תַּחַת הַנְּעַר עֶבֶד לְאֲדֹנָי וְהַנְּעַר יַעַל עִם-אָחִיו:	
44.34 כִּי-אֵיךְ אֶעֱלֶה אֶל-אָבִי וְהַנְּעַר אֵינָנו אִתִּי פֶן אֶרְאֶה בְּרָע אֲשֶׁר יִמָּצֵא אֶת-אָבִי:	Interrogative

Unlike 44:7-8 the proxy of the conversation in this dialogue is clearly indicated: Judah is the one speaking with Joseph in the name of the party. That is most probably why the whole dialogue is introduced by single verb frames. In the first speech of the conversation initiated by Joseph (verse 15) one finds two apparently unanswered interrogatives introduced respectively by the question word *מה* and *הלוא*. The first of them, – *מה-המעשה הזה אשר עשיתם* – “What deed is this that you have done?” obviously does not expect an answer since the speaker already knows it. Besides that, the speaker continues speaking, uttering another interrogative sentence. This first interrogative seems to fall into the same category as the one in 42:28, although we stated in footnote 81 that the principles we found for *מה זאת* do not apply for questions with *מה זה*. In this one case, however, the expression is also

followed by a form of the root עשה.<sup>89</sup> We concluded in 42:28 that three different speech acts might be involved in the use of the formula: a statement, a question seeking an explanation and criticism. This conclusion seems to hold for this interrogative. The speaker states clearly what he already knows (and in this case what he had planned); the speaker criticises the hearer for acting in such a way (although in this case deceitfully); the speaker expects an explanation (may be in the form of an excuse) for such an action.

The following interrogative הֲלוֹא יִדְעֶתֶם כִּי־נֹחַשׁ יִנְחֹשׁ אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר כְּמֹנִי: – “Do you not know that such a man as I can indeed divine?” (“Don’t you know that I can truly divine?” - my translation) also fits into the description we have already made of interrogatives introduced by הֲלוֹא (37:13, 40:8, 42:22 and 44:5): the interrogative is used to make a clear statement (in this case, however, the rules are somehow twisted - S wants to make H believe something that may not be true). One can easily realise from the context that the utterance does not fulfil the rules for questions (S knows the answer; S does not want information; it is not an attempt to elicit information).

There are two significant differences between this specific הֲלוֹא interrogative and the others we analysed that one must note: firstly, as we noted above, there is a twist in the whole set of rules regarding this statement. The essential condition, “counts as an undertaking to the effect that *p* represents an actual state of affairs” should read “counts as an undertaking to the effect that S wants H to believe that *p* represents an actual state of affairs.” Thus, the sincerity condition and preparatory condition also change. Secondly, in previous interrogatives the hearers already knew the stated

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<sup>89</sup> Three other similar cases in BH are Jdg 8:1, 2 Sam 12:21 and Neh 2:19.



fact, while here it is possible that the hearer may not have known or suspected what is being stated.

The reaction to the criticism and the statement in verse 15 come also in the form of interrogative sentences in verse 16. The three interrogatives are marked as such by the question word **מַה** and are in a straight sequence, which show that they do not intend to pose real information-seeking questions but are interrogatives used to perform a different sort of speech act. Besides uttering the three interrogatives in a row, the speaker continues the speech with a statement – God has found out the guilt of your servants; behold, we are my lord's slaves, both we and he also in whose hand the cup has been found." It is not possible to argue that the interrogatives were used to pose a self-question because the speaker clearly identifies the hearer ("to my lord").

I propose that, as in the case of 37:26, these interrogatives are used to make simple statements – here, however, in a situation of puzzlement. Directly they would read:

And Judah said, "What shall we say to my lord? What shall we speak? Or how can we clear ourselves? God has found out the guilt of your servants; behold, we are my lord's slaves, both we and he also in whose hand the cup has been found."

And Judah said: "We have nothing to say to my lord to justify this. We have no words. We cannot clear ourselves. God has found the guilt ..."

One must note, however that the proxy for the group, Judah, does not promptly admit to the charge of robbery but admits that they were somehow caught in their sin. Judah was probably acknowledging their guilt in a similar manner as the brothers did in 42:21.

The interrogative in verse 19 **הֲיֵשׁ לָכֶם אָב אוֹ-אֶחָד** – "Have you a father, or a brother?" occurs in an embedded direct speech where Judah is retelling a dialogue between Joseph and the brothers. The sentence marked by the interrogative particle

ה followed by the predicator of existence שׁ is clearly used to pose a real information-seeking question. The utterance holds with the rules for questions (page 79) and also receives an answer in the next part of the pair. Besides that, the embedded *lê'môr* frame states the speech act performed - "My lord *asked* his servants, saying..." Thus the interrogative in 44:19 can be clearly identified as an information-seeking question.

The next interrogative, in verse 34 is still part of the same direct speech started in verse 18 by Judah, and although the scene continues, the dialogue is interrupted. Thus, we have an interrogative in the second pair part of an adjacency pair without an apparent answer. The interrogative כִּי-אֵיךְ אֶעֱלֶה אֶל-אָבִי וְהִנֵּצֵר אִינִנִּי אִתִּי - "For how can I go back to my father if the lad is not with me?" is marked as such by the particle אֵיךְ with a כִּי introducing the sentence. The כִּי is used to signal a conclusive motivation which here is intended to finally convince the hearer (see Ps 1:6). This motivation entails the whole argument from verses 18 to 33 including the request in verse 33 - "Now therefore, let your servant, I pray you, remain instead of the lad as a slave to my lord; and let the lad go back with his brothers." Considering the explanation and reasons given to the man (if he returns without the lad his father will die, thus it is better for him to stay and for Benjamin to return), it seems unreasonable to perform the action described - return without Benjamin. One must remember that this was exactly Joseph's intention as it is clear from verse 17 - "Only the man in whose hand the cup was found shall be my slave; but as for you, go up in peace to your father." Coming from a man like him, this was considered an order or a command. That is also why Judah introduces his speech with words mitigating the situation: "O my lord, let your servant, I pray you, speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not your anger burn against your servant; for you are like Pharaoh himself." In conclusion, Joseph's order is like asking the man to kill his father. Having posed this

clearly, Judah utters the interrogative which, I believe, challenges Joseph's order: "The bottom line is that I cannot go back to my father if the lad is not with me." Judah is in no position to refuse the order but as a last resort he reasons with the one ordering. The final sentence of the pair **יִמְצָא אֶת־אָבִי: פֶּן** – introduced with the subordinating conjunction **פֶּן** – should be translated as "lest I see the evil that would overcome my father."<sup>90</sup> Van der Merwe *et al.* (§ 40.14.1) state about the particle: "On the basis of its meaning, **פֶּן** could also be classified as a negative particle." Thus, the sentence governed by the interrogative (understood as a negative - I cannot) makes perfect sense – "I cannot do... for I don't want to see the evil that would overcome my father."

We saw previously that an interrogative introduced by **אִיךָ** can be used to refuse and reproach (see analysis of 39:9). Although a reproach is not absolutely clear here, the interrogative in 44:34 has a similar function. In uttering the sentence Judah states his refusal and is ready to take the consequences if only he could prevent his father from suffering.

### **Genesis 45:3**

This pericope is part of the sequence of the last one where we investigated Judah's request without knowing that the man he was speaking to was his brother Joseph. The scene develops in quite unexpected ways for the brothers when Joseph, after Judah's appeal reveals himself as their brother, the one that they tried to kill and eventually sold as a slave to merchants.

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<sup>90</sup> This is my own translation. RSV translates the sentence: "I fear to see the evil that would come upon my father. It would read better if "for" was included: "I cannot... for I fear to see..."

Table 24 - Pericope: Genesis 45:1-3

45.1 וְלֹא-יָכֹל יוֹסֵף לְהִתְאַפֵּק לְכָל הַנֹּצְצִים עָלָיו וַיִּקְרָא הוֹצִיאוּ כָל-אִישׁ מֵעָלָי וְלֹא-עָמַד אִישׁ אִתּוֹ בְּהַתְרוֹדָע יוֹסֵף אֶל-אֶחָיו:	Narrative - Direct speech introduced by single verb frame
45.2 וַיִּתֵּן אֶת-קִלְוֹ בְּכֶכֶי וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ מִצְרַיִם וַיִּשְׁמַע בֵּית פַּרְעֹה:	Narrative
45.3 וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף אֶל-אֶחָיו אֲנִי יוֹסֵף הָעוֹד אֲבִי תִּי וְלֹא-יָכֹל אֶחָיו לַעֲנֹת אִתּוֹ כִּי נִבְהָלּוּ מִפְגִּיו:	Direct speech introduced by single verb frame - interrogative

The interrogative in verse 3 (הָעוֹד אֲבִי תִי – “is my father still alive?”) looks like a real information-seeking question. It is very similar to the interrogative in 42:7 which is used to perform this speech act. Besides that, although without a direct answer, the narrator presents a narrative response to the speech act which could indicate that there is a gap for an answer – וְלֹא-יָכֹל אֶחָיו לַעֲנֹת אִתּוֹ כִּי נִבְהָלּוּ מִפְגִּיו: – “But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed at his presence.” The presence of the verb עָנָה could be understood as that (as RSV translates the verb - to answer). We know, however, from the information in the context that the speaker already knows the answer to the question: Joseph knows that his father is alive and the hearers also know that the speaker knows the answer. That alone could point to the interrogative as a different kind of speech act.

One should note, however, that there is a big shift in the narrative at this point. The narrator points that out by changing the discourse from “Joseph said to them” (44:15) to “Joseph said to his brothers” (45:3). The interrogative also points to that shift: in the almost identical interrogative in 43:7, the pronominal suffix changes from second to first person (אֲבִי/אֲבִיכֶם) thus making the question a very personal one. Commentators tend to see it as an expression of emotions from a son who wants to make sure that his father is alive (see Westermann 1986:142, Keil & Delitzsch

1976:366). That seems to be the only viable explanation for the speech act, a question seeking an answer for confirmation purposes.

### Genesis 47:15 and 19

This pericope presents two interrogatives apparently without an answer. Both are introduced by *למה* and have similar functions which lead us to discuss them together.

Table 25 - Pericope: Genesis 47:13-21

47.13 וַלְחֶם אֵין בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ כִּי־כָבֵד הָרָעַב מֵאֲדָר וַתֵּלֶה אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וְאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן מִפְּנֵי הָרָעַב:	Narrative
47.14 וַיִּלְקֹט יוֹסֵף אֶת־כָּל־הַכֶּסֶף הַנִּמְצָא בְּאֶרֶץ־מִצְרַיִם וּבְאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן בַּשֶּׁבֶר אֲשֶׁר־הֵם שֹׂבְרִים וַיָּבֵא יוֹסֵף אֶת־הַכֶּסֶף בֵּיתָה פְּרֹעֶה:	Narrative
47.15 וַיִּתֶּן הַכֶּסֶף מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וּמֵאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וַיָּבֵאוּ כָל־מִצְרַיִם אֶל־יוֹסֵף לֵאמֹר הִבֵּה־לָנוּ לֶחֶם וְלָמָּה נָמוֹת נִגְדָּךְ כִּי אָפֶס כֶּסֶף:	Narrative followed by direct speech introduced by <i>lē'môr</i> frame - choral speech - interrogative
47.16 וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף הָבוּ מִקְנֵיכֶם וְאֶתְנֶה לָכֶם בְּמִקְנֵיכֶם אִם־אָפֶס כֶּסֶף:	Direct speech introduced by single verb frame
47.17 וַיָּבִיאוּ אֶת־מִקְנֵיהֶם אֶל־יוֹסֵף וַיִּתֵּן לָהֶם יוֹסֵף לֶחֶם בַּסּוּסִים וּבַמִּקְנֶה הַצֹּאן וּבַמִּקְנֶה הַבָּקָר וּבַחֲמֹרִים וַיִּנְהֵלֵם בַּלֶּחֶם בְּכָל־מִקְנֵיהֶם בַּשָּׁנָה הַהִוא:	Narrative
47.18 וַתֵּתֶם הַשָּׁנָה הַהִוא וַיָּבֵאוּ אֵלָיו בַּשָּׁנָה הַשְּׁנִיָּה וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ לֹא־נִכְתָּד מֵאֲדָנִי בִּי אִם־תָּם הַכֶּסֶף וּמִקְנֶה הַבְּהֵמָה אֶל־אֲדֹנִי לֹא נִשְׁאָר לִפְנֵי אֲדֹנִי בְּלֹתִי אִם־גּוֹיֹתֵנוּ וְאֲדָמָתֵנוּ:	Narrative followed by direct speech introduced by single verb frame - choral speech
47.19 לָמָּה נָמוֹת לַעֲיֹנֶיךָ גַּם־אֲנֹחֲנוּ גַם־אֲדָמָתֵנוּ קִנְיָה־אֲתָנוּ וְאֶת־אֲדָמָתֵנוּ בַּלֶּחֶם וְנִהְיֶה אֲנִיחֵנוּ וְאֲדָמָתֵנוּ עֲבָדִים לַפְּרֹעֶה וְתוֹן־זָרַע וְנִחְיֶה וְלֹא נָמוֹת וְהָאֲדָמָה לֹא תִשָּׂם:	Continue direct speech - interrogative
47.20 וַיִּקֶּן יוֹסֵף אֶת־כָּל־אֲדָמַת מִצְרַיִם לַפְּרֹעֶה כִּי־מָכְרוּ מִצְרַיִם אִישׁ שְׂדֵהוּ כִּי־חָזַק עֲלֵהֶם הָרָעַב וַתְּהִי הָאָרֶץ לַפְּרֹעֶה:	Narrative
47.21 וְאֶת־הָעָם הָעֶבְרִי אֲתוֹ לַעֲרִים מִקְצֵה גְבוּל־מִצְרַיִם וְעַד־קִצְעוֹ:	Narrative

Both *למה* interrogatives are used to provide the reason for a request from the hearer.

In the first case, verse 15, the direct speech is introduced by a *lē'môr* frame (לֵאמֹר) /

וַיִּבְאֹר (וִיבְאֹר) and the request is posed first - הָבֵהּ-לָנוּ לֶחֶם - "Give us bread." The request is followed by the interrogative וְלָמָּה נָמוּת בְּנֶגְדְךָ - "why should we die before your eyes?" The second part of the verse is marked by a כִּי clause giving the basic motivation for the request - כִּי אָפַס כֶּסֶף - "The fact of the matter is that our money is gone" (see Van der Merwe *et al.* § 40.c).

In the second case, verse 19, the direct speech is introduced by a single verb frame. The interrogative comes first in the sequence - לָמָּה נָמוּת לְעֵינֶיךָ גַּם-אֶנְחֵנוּ - "Why should we die before your eyes, both we and our land?" The repetition of גַּם is used to make "it clear that the inclusion of **both** items preceded by גַּם is of **special importance** in a particular context (Van der Merwe *et al.* § 41.5.2.ii).

The interrogative is followed by the request -- קְנֵה-אֶתְנוּ וְאֶת-אֲדָמָתְנוּ בְּלֶחֶם -- וְנַחֲלֶיהָ אֶנְחֵנוּ וְאֲדָמָתְנוּ עֲבָדִים לְפָרְעָה וְתוֹ-זָרַע וְנַחֲלֶיהָ וְלֹא נָמוּת וְהָאֲדָמָה לֹא תִשָּׁם - "Buy us and our land in exchange for food, and we with our land will be slaves to Pharaoh; and give us seed, that we may live, and not die, and that the land may not be desolate."

In both cases the hearer, Joseph, does not give an explanation for a "why?" question but poses conditions for the granting of the requests. For the interrogative in verse 15 one finds Joseph answering verbally in direct speech. For verse 19 one finds a pragmatic response which does not correspond to an explanation but the narrative tells the reader that the hearer conceded to the request.

In previous cases where interrogatives were introduced by לָמָּה we saw that they were used to criticise the hearer (42:1; 43:6; 44:4, 7) and fell in the category directives (S attempts to get H to do something). In these two verses, however, it is more plausible to understand that the interrogatives were used to make statements



(S believes something), arguing in favour of some point: the interrogatives are used to try to convince the hearer to change a possible course of action (argumentative use – see the analysis of 37:26). The sentences would read as follows:

"Give us food; why should we die before your eyes? For our money is gone."

RSV 47:15

Why should we die before your eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and our land for food, and we with our land will be slaves to Pharaoh; and give us seed, that we may live, and not die, and that the land may not be desolate."

RSV 47:19

"Please, give us food. There is no reason for us to die before you. The fact of the matter is that we do not have any money."

Direct speech

"There is no good reason for us and the land to die before you! Buy us and our land..."

Direct speech

Thus, the interrogatives are used to introduce or argue in favour of a directive class speech act, similar to the interrogatives in 37:13 and 26.

### Genesis 49:9

This interrogative occurs in a direct speech that is clearly a poetic speech embedded in narrative. The speaker does not expect an immediate verbal reaction to the individual sentences in the poem. The text is rich in metaphors and the interrogative is referring to one of them: Judah is compared to a lion's cub that lies down in the same manner as the lion and the lioness when they come from hunting – who dares to arouse him? -- *מי יקימנו?*

Table 26 - Pericope: Genesis 49:1-10

49.1 וַיִּקְרָא יַעֲקֹב אֶל-בָּנָיו וַיֹּאמֶר הֶאֱסָפּוּ וְאֲנִי־	Direct speech introduced by multiple verb frame
לָכֶם אֶת אֲשֶׁר-יִקְרָא אֲתֶכֶם בְּאַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים:	
49.8 יְהוּדָה אַתָּה יוֹדוּךָ אַחִירִי יִדָּה בְּעֶרְךָ אֲבִיךָ	Interrogative
יִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לָךְ בְּנֵי אֲבִיךָ:	
49.9 גִּיּוֹר אֲרִיָּה יְהוּדָה מִטְרַף בְּנֵי עֲלִית כְּדָע	
רִבֵּץ כְּאַרְיֵה וְכִלְכִּיא מִי יִקְיָמֵנוּ:	
49.10 לֹא-יָסוּר שִׁבְט מִיְהוּדָה וּמִחֻקֵּק מִבֵּין רִגְלָיו	
עַד כִּי-יָבֹא יִשִּׁילָה יִשִּׁילוּ וְלֹא יִקְהֶת עַמִּים:	



The interrogative is followed in the text by another “tribal saying” (see Westermann 1986:229) in which the metaphor is changed and is not directly related to the previous one. This usage of interrogatives in poetic texts is quite common – a question that has an obvious answer to both speaker and hearer in a situation where the hearer is not exactly “interactive” with the speaker. From the context the hearer / reader should know the answer. It is clear that the interrogative is used to make a strong statement about a state of affairs: “No one will arouse him!” This is the intended result of the speech act to the hearer.

### Genesis 50:19

Table 27 - Pericope: Genesis 50:15-21

50.15 וַיִּרְאוּ אֶחָיִי-יוֹסֵף כִּי-מָת אָבִיהֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ יִשְׁטְמוּנוּ יוֹסֵף וְהָשִׁב יֹשִׁיב לָנוּ אֶת כָּל-הָרָעָה אֲשֶׁר גָּמְלָנוּ אֹתוֹ:	Narrative followed by direct speech introduced by single verb frame - choral
50.16 וַיֵּצֵאוּ אֶל-יוֹסֵף לֵאמֹר אַבְיָךְ צִוָּה לִפְנֵי מוֹתוֹ לֵאמֹר:	Direct speech introduced by <i>lē'môr</i> frame
50.17 כֹּה-תֹאמְרוּ לְיוֹסֵף אֲנֵנָּה שָׂא נָא פָּשַׁע אֶתִיד וְחַטָּאתָם כִּי-רָעָה גָּמְלוּךְ וַעֲתָה שָׂא נָא לִפְשַׁע עַבְדֵי אֱלֹהֵי אַבְיָךְ וַיִּכַּף יוֹסֵף בְּדַבָּרָם אֵלָיו:	Embedded direct speech - narrative
50.18 וַיֵּלְכוּ גַם-אֶחָיו וַיִּפְּלוּ לִפְנָיו וַיֹּאמְרוּ הִנֵּנּוּ לְךָ לַעֲבָדִים:	Narrative followed by direct speech introduced by single verb frame - choral
50.19 וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם יוֹסֵף אֶל-תִּירָאוּ כִּי הִתַּחַת אֱלֹהִים אָנִי:	Direct speech introduced by single verb frame - interrogative
50.20 וְאַתֶּם חֲשַׁבְתֶּם עָלַי רָעָה אֱלֹהִים חֲשָׁבָה לְטֹבָה לְמַעַן עֲשֶׂה כִּי-יִוָּסֵף הַזֶּה לְהַחֲיִית עַם-רַב:	Continue direct speech
50.21 וַעֲתָה אֶל-תִּירָאוּ אֲנִי אֲכַלְכֵּל אֶתְכֶם וְאֶת-טַפְכֶּם וַיִּנָּחֶם אוֹתָם וַיִּדְּבֹר עַל-לִבָּם:	Continue direct speech followed by narrative

The interrogative in verse 19 – הִתַּחַת אֱלֹהִים אָנִי – “am I in the place of God?” is introduced by the particle כִּי functioning as a co-ordinating conjunction. Thus, it gives a motivation for the previous directive action -- אַל-תִּירָאוּ – “Do not fear!” It is clear that the speaker is not seeking information but giving information. Not only does the speaker continue the speech at that stage but the scene also ends with that speech.

Besides that, the answer to such a question should be obvious to both speaker and hearer: no one can be in the place of God. In the explanation that follows Joseph makes this very clear. Thus, the interrogative is used to make a clear statement about a state of affairs: "Do not fear, I urge you, because I am not in the place of God." Joseph's statement is meant to comfort his brothers. He is not the one to intervene in God's action as he further explains in the following verses: "'As for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones.'" Thus he reassured them and comforted them."

## CONCLUSIONS

After analysing a number of apparently unanswered interrogatives in our sample text we may draw some conclusions about the use of these interrogatives as well as point out patterns that emerged from the analysis. Below I point out the interrogatives without an apparent answer in the JN that we concluded were not used to "ask a question" but to perform a different speech act. Some of the texts that were analysed above will appear in the conclusion of the next section since, although apparently without an answer, they were used to perform the speech act "question".

Table 28 - Interrogatives used to perform speech acts other than questions

Pericope	Text	Hebrew Markers	Adjacency pairs 1st part / 2nd part	Function
37:5-11	37:8	אם / הַמֶּלֶךְ	2nd / end of dialogue	Criticise
	37:10	הַבּוֹא / מָה	2nd / end of dialogue	Criticise
37:12-17	37:13	הַלּוֹא	1st / same character	Make a statement
37:23-30	37:26	מָה־	1st / same character	Make a statement
39:7-10	39:9	וְאֵיךְ	2nd / end of dialogue	Refuse command/ Rebuke
40:7-9	40:8	הַלּוֹא	1st / dialogue continues	Make a statement
41:37-41	41:38	הַנִּמְצָא	No pairing	Make a statement
42:1-17	42:1	לָמָּה	1st / same character	Criticise
42:21-24	42:22	הַלּוֹא	2nd / end dialogue	Make a statement
42:27-28	42:28	מָה־	2nd / end dialogue	Make a statement/ ask question
43:1-7	43:6	לָמָּה	1st / dialogue continues	Criticise
	43:7	הַיְדוּעַ / הַיֵּשׁ / הַעוֹד	2nd / same character	Rebuttal
44:3-10	44:4	לָמָּה	1st / same character	Criticise
	44:5	הַלּוֹא	1st / dialogue continues	Make a statement
	44:7	לָמָּה	2nd / same character	Criticise
	44:8	וְאֵיךְ	2nd / same character	Deny a charge
44:14-34	44:15	הַלּוֹא / מָה־	1st / dialogue continues	Criticise/Statement
	44:16	וּמָה־ / מָה־ / מָה־	2nd / same character	Make a statements
	44:34	כִּי־אֵיךְ	2nd / end dialogue	Refuse command
47:13-21	47:15	וְלָמָּה	1st / dialogue continues	Make a statement
	47:19	לָמָּה	1st / 2nd part silent	Make a statement
49:1-10	49:9	מִי	Poetry - not dialogical	Make a statement
50:15-21	50:19	כִּי הַתַּחַת	2nd / same character	Make a statement

This group of 30 interrogatives (23 verses) represents over 60% of the total number of interrogatives in the JN (48 interrogative sentences plus an allegedly unmarked one). Some are used individually to perform one speech act, others are used as a group to perform one speech act. Some are used individually to perform more than one speech act at a time. It is notable that more than half of the total interrogatives in the JN are used to perform a speech act other than a question, although the statistics are only valid for this narrative and not applicable to BH as a whole. Most commonly the interrogatives were used to criticise the hearer and make statements. A few were used to refuse a command and one to deny an accusation.

Observing the relation *interrogative marker* in contrast to the *function* of the interrogatives one notices that it is quite loose. Many interrogative particle/words can be used to introduce critical/corrective questions (למה/מה/הלווא/ה) as well as to perform the act "statement" (אין/למה/מה/מי/הלווא/ה). Some of these interrogative particle/words are used to pose real information-seeking questions (see next section). Thus, it is difficult, if not impossible, to propose a syntactic-morphologic classification of questions because form and function are not in a one-to-one relationship.

Observing the relation *function* in contrast to the placement of the utterance in the pairing of the dialogue there are just a few possibilities: the same character continues speaking, the dialogue ends with the utterance of the interrogative or the dialogue continues normally with the hearer speaking. All three possibilities occur for any of the most common speech acts performed in the utterance of the interrogatives: criticism and statements.

#### **APPARENTLY ANSWERED INTERROGATIVES**

In this section we will briefly analyse the remaining interrogatives in our sample text. The fact that they are apparently answered indicates that in most cases we are dealing with direct speech acts. Since we already dealt with some of them in the previous section (because of the context in which they occurred - 37:30,<sup>91</sup> 40:7, 43:27, 29, 44:19) these interrogatives are the basis for the analysis in this section.

#### **Genesis 37:15 and 16**

These interrogatives appear in the pericope discussed on page 89. They follow the dialogue between Joseph and his father in which the former requests Joseph to go into the fields and find about the brothers' welfare. As Joseph wanders into the fields

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<sup>91</sup> We concluded that this apparently unanswered interrogative is actually answered in a pragmatic response in the text.

he meets a stranger with whom a dialogue occurs. The dialogue consists of two pairs: 15b/16a and 16b/17a.

The first pair part of pair one is introduced by a *lê'môr* frame in which the narrator clearly indicates the speech act performed: וַיִּשְׁאַלְהוּ הָאִישׁ לְאָמֹר – “and the man asked him.” The interrogative itself is marked by the question word מַה and presents a straight question: מַה־תִּבְקֶשׁ: – “What are you seeking?” Observing the second pair part it is clear that the hearer understood the utterance as a request for information and as such gives the information requested -- אֶת־אֲחֵי אֲנֹכִי מִבְּקֶשׁ – “I am seeking my brothers.” After giving the requested information Joseph continues the speech posing another request for information introduced by the verb הִגִּידָה followed by the particle נָא, translated usually as “Tell me please.” This is quite an appropriate introduction for the request that follows.<sup>92</sup> The interrogative itself is marked as such by the question word אֵיפֹה הֵם רֹעִים: -- אֵיפֹה – “where they are pasturing the flock.” Note that RSV translates the interrogative as an indirect question instead of “where are they pasturing the flock?” This, however, is not relevant in terms of the speech act performance considering that both, directly or indirectly, have the same function: request for information. The speaker sincerely wants the information and believes that the hearer can give it to him. Upon the request the hearer promptly gives the information requested by the speaker: וַיֵּסְעוּ מִזֶּה כִּי שָׁמַעְתִּי אֲמָרִים וְלָכָה דֹּתָנָה – “They have gone away, for I heard them say, “Let us go to Dothan.””

Thus, these apparently answered interrogatives are easily identified as real information-seeking questions according to speech acts rules.

<sup>92</sup> See verse 14 on the same chapter. In many instances the particle accomplishes a similar function: an introduction to a request (see Gen 24:23, 32:30, 37:32, Ex 4:18, Num 20:10, Deut 4:32, Jdg 18:5, 1 Sam 9:18, Eze 18:25, Jon 1:8).



**Genesis 37:32**

The pericope in which this dialogue occurs is to be found in the beginning of the narrative, right after Reuben finds out that Joseph is not in the cistern. We concluded in the analysis of the interrogative in 37:30 that this pericope functions as a pragmatic response to the question in that verse.

*Table 29 - Pericope: Genesis 37:31-33*

37.31 וַיִּקְחוּ אֶת־כְּתֹנֶת יוֹסֵף וַיִּשְׁחֲטוּ שְׂעִיר עִזִּים וַיַּטְבִּילוּ אֶת־הַכְתָּנֶת בַּדָּם:	Narrative
37.32 וַיִּשְׁלְחוּ אֶת־כְּתֹנֶת הַפָּסִים וַיְבִיאוּ אֶל־אֲבֵיהֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ זֹאת מִצְעָאֲנוּ הִכְרִיזָה הַכְתָּנֶת בְּנֵךְ הוּא אִם־לֹא:	Narrative followed by direct speech introduced by single verb frame - interrogative
37.33 וַיִּכְרְזָה וַיֹּאמֶר כְּתֹנֶת בְּנֵי תִיָּה רָעָה אֲכַלְתָּהּ טָרֶף טָרֶף יוֹסֵף:	Narrative followed by direct speech introduced by single verb frame

Verses 32 and 33 present a clear question/answer adjacency pair. The interrogative in verse 32 is an indirect alternative question marked by the interrogative particle ה: – “This we have found; see now whether it is your son's robe or not.” Although the sincerity condition is flawed the remaining conditions remain. In other words, although they already know the information the speech act still counts as an attempt to elicit information from H (essential condition). The speaker pretends that he/they do not know the information so that we cannot consider it as an exam question. The sentence is uttered as a real question.

One should note that the question (a request for information) is entailed in a previous request as indicated by the verb נָכַר followed by the particle אַּ. RSV translates the particle as “now” as it is the meaning often attributed to אַּ. In this case, however, it seems that the particle has another function, similar to its use in the question in 37:16: an introduction to a request. The use of the particle associated with the so-called volitive mood is well attested (see Joüon-Muraoka §114.b, GKC § 105 b 1,

WO § 40.2.5.c, Van der Merwe *et al.* § 19.4.1 *ff.*) which makes the particle a good candidate to introduce these direct requests for information. Observing the use of **וְנָא** in this case as well as the others pointed out in footnote 92 (Gen 24:23, 32:30, 37:32, Ex 4:18, Num 20:10, Deut 4:32, Jdg 18:5, 1 Sam 9:18, Eze 18:25, Jon 1:8), it seems that the particle is often associated with requests for information and operates as an introductory element to it.<sup>93</sup>

The response to the first speech act comes in two parts, which helps one realise that the first speech act has more than one function: (a) **וַיִּכְיֶרְהָ** – “And he recognised it” is the first response to the request, not necessarily a verbal response – “Please, recognise.”; (b) **וַיֹּאמֶר כְּתָנַת בְּנִי חִיָּה** – “and he said, ‘It’s my son’s robe!’” is the verbal action in response to the indirect question. As stated above, because questions are a sub-category of requests, it is easy to have them mixed in an apparently single speech act.

### Genesis 42:7

This interrogative occurs in a long pericope that comprises verses 6 to 17 of chapter 42. For our purposes, however, verses 6 and 7 are enough to analyse the speech act.

Table 30 - Pericope: Genesis: 42:6-7

42.6 וַיֹּסֶף הוּא הַשְׁלִיט עַל-הָאָרֶץ הוּא הַמֶּשְׁפִּיר לְכָל-עַם הָאָרֶץ וַיָּבֵאוּ אֹתוֹ יוֹסֵף וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה-לּוֹ אֲפִים אֶרְצָה:	Narrative
42.7 וַיֵּרָא יוֹסֵף אֶת-אֶחָיו וַיִּכְרֶם וַיִּתְּנֵם אֵלֵיהֶם וַיִּדְבֹּר אֹתָם קְשׁוֹת וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם מֵאֵין בָּאתֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם בְּנֵעַן לְשֶׁבֶר-אֶכֶל:	Narrative followed by direct speech introduced by multiple verb frame - Direct speech introduced by single verb frame - choral

<sup>93</sup> See Kaufman (1991:195-198).



The interrogative appears in a simple adjacency pair in verse 7a/b which is a question/answer pair. The direct speech in which the interrogative occurs is framed by a multiple verb frame that indexes the metapragmatic features of the speech and not the speech act itself.<sup>94</sup> Thus, וַיִּדְבֹּר אֲתֶם קָשׁוֹת וַיֹּאמֶר – “He spoke roughly to them and said” indexes the manner in which the speaker utters the speech act but does not index the speech act itself as in previous cases we analysed (e.g. 37:10 – “rebuked and said” 39:9 – “refused and said”). It seems that the purpose of speaking this way is to intimidate the hearer, and the narrator wants to make that clear. One must observe that the intent of the speaker is to threaten the hearer as it is clearly spelled out in the same verse: וַיִּכְרֶם וַיִּתְנַכֵּר אֲלֵיהֶם – “He recognised them but made himself strange to them.”<sup>95</sup>

The interrogative itself is marked by the locative particle מֵאֵין (see page 32 for the use of the particle) and apparently poses a straight information-seeking question: מֵאֵין בָּאתֶם – “Where do you come from?” Although the sincerity condition is flawed, the other conditions for questions hold for the utterance (the speaker pretends he does not know the answer). To use Hyman's terminology, the hearer *fields* the utterance as a question and gives an answer to it: מֵאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן לְשָׂכֵר-אֶכְלִי – “From the land of Canaan, to buy food.” Notice, however, that the hearer gives more information than what is requested - “to buy food.” Although the speaker did not ask directly “What are you doing here?” or “Why are you here?” that is what the hearer decided to add to his answer as an explanation. That addition most probably arises from the intimidation the hearer sensed in the utterance of the speech act. Thus, the speech act, although in the form an interrogative, had more than one effect on the hearer (caused fear). We know from the text that intimidation was also the

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<sup>94</sup> See Miller 1992:315.

purpose of the speaker and in the answer one can see the results of the intended speech act. Reading the rest of the episode one notes that “speaking roughly” does not only introduce the first speech act in the dialogue but prompts the hearer (and also the reader) to the interrogation that follows. This brings us back to a point which we have not discussed yet: the perlocutionary acts which are the consequences of an illocutionary act (see page 61). Although the speaker uttered an interrogative, the manner it was uttered brought consequences which are promptly seen in the hearer’s response to the act.

### Genesis 46:33, 47:3 and 8

Genesis 46:33 is an interrogative uttered in instructions that are carried out in 47:3.

For this reason we will analyse only the interrogative in the later verse.

Table 31 - Pericope: Genesis 47:1-6

47.1 וַיִּבֶן יוֹסֵף וַיֵּגֶד לְפָרְעָה וַיֹּאמֶר אָבִי וְאָחִי וְצֹאנָם וּבְקָרָם וְכָל-אֲשֶׁר לָהֶם בָּאוּ מֵאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וְהֵנָּה בְּאֶרֶץ גִּשְׁוֹן:	Narrative followed by direct speech introduced by multiple verb frame
47.2 וּמִקְצָה אָחִיו לָקַח חֲמִשָּׁה אָנָשִׁים וַיֵּצֵאוּ לִפְנֵי פַרְעֹה:	Narrative
47.3 וַיֹּאמֶר פַּרְעֹה אֶל-אָחִיו מַה-מַּעֲשִׂיכֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל-פַּרְעֹה רַעְיָה צֹאן עֲבָדֶיךָ גַּם-אֲנָחְנוּ גַּם-אֲבוֹתֵינוּ:	Direct speech introduced by single verb frame - interrogative followed by direct speech introduced by single verb frame
47.4 וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל-פַּרְעֹה לָגֹר בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן כִּי-אֵין מְרֹעָה לְצֹאן אֲשֶׁר לַעֲבָדֶיךָ כִּי-כִבְדָּה הָרַעַב בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וְעַתָּה יֵשְׁבוּ-גַּם עֲבָדֶיךָ בְּאֶרֶץ גִּשְׁוֹן:	Direct speech - continues same character re-introduced by single verb frame
47.5 וַיֹּאמֶר פַּרְעֹה אֶל-יוֹסֵף לֵאמֹר אָבִיךָ וְאָחִיךָ בָּאוּ אֵלֶיךָ:	Direct speech introduced by single verb frame
47.6 אֲרֹץ מִצְרַיִם לִפְנֶיךָ הִוא בְּמִיטַב הָאֶרֶץ הוֹשֵׁב אֶת-אָבִיךָ וְאֶת-אָחִיךָ יֵשְׁבוּ בְּאֶרֶץ גִּשְׁוֹן וְאִם-יָדַעַת וְיֵשׁ-בָּם אָנָשִׁים-חֵיל וְשִׁמְתָם שְׂרֵי מִקְנֶה עַל-אֲשֶׁר-לִי:	
47.7 וַיִּבֶן יוֹסֵף אֶת-יַעֲקֹב אָבִיו וַיַּעֲמְדֵהוּ לִפְנֵי פַּרְעֹה וַיְבָרֶךְ יַעֲקֹב אֶת-פַּרְעֹה:	Narrative
47.8 וַיֹּאמֶר פַּרְעֹה אֶל-יַעֲקֹב כֹּמֶה יָמֵי שְׁנֵי חַיֶּיךָ:	Direct speech introduced by single verb frame - interrogative

95 The RSV reading is: “and knew them, but he treated them like strangers.”

47.9 וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אֶל־פַּרְעֹה יָמִי שְׁנֵי מִגֹּרֵי שָׁלְשִׁים וּמֵאֶת שָׁנָה מָעֵט וְרַעִים הָיוּ יָמֵי שְׁנֵי חַיֵּי וְלֹא הִשְׁיֵגוּ אֶת־יָמִי שְׁנֵי חַיֵּי אֲבֹתִי בְּיָמֵי מִגֹּרֵיהֶם:	Direct speech introduced by single verb frame
47.10 וַיִּכְרֹךְ יַעֲקֹב אֶת־פַּרְעֹה וַיֵּצֵא מִלִּפְנֵי פַרְעֹה:	Narrative

The two interrogatives are in verses 3 and 8 which, despite occurring in the same pericope, belong to separate episodes. The first episode narrates a dialogue between Pharaoh and Joseph's brothers (five of them) after Joseph has introduced them to him (verse 2).

The narrator places Pharaoh uttering the interrogative as the introduction of the dialogue without further explanation, corresponding to the instructions that were given by Joseph to his brothers in 46:33: מַה־מַּעֲשֵׂיכֶם – "What is your occupation?"

The narrator omits any other introductions that were certainly due on the occasion. Obviously the matter of their occupation was a point of great concern as the previous verses make clear. It is also clear that the speaker already knew the answer to the question since in verse 1 Joseph states that they came with all their possessions including their flocks, and in 46:32 he tells his brothers that he is going to tell Pharaoh that they are shepherds. Thus, it seems that a certain social custom is involved here, although the sequence seems a clear-cut question/answer pair. One possibility is that a social formality is in progress and that the uttering of the interrogative is part of the formality. Observe that the meeting is not a casual one: Joseph knew what would be asked beforehand, a particular party was chosen to take part in the meeting (five men), they were given instructions on how to answer the question and, as the text shows, they come with a particular request to Pharaoh. It should also be noted that the narrator introduces the request following their answer with another single verb frame, indicating that probably more happened in terms of dialogue than is actually narrated (verse 3 ends with a choral speech by the brothers

introduced by the frame *וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵל-פַּרְעֹה* and verse 4 begins with exactly the same frame). Thus, although the pair could simply fulfil the conditions for a question/answer pair and the speech act be a straightforward question there are reasons to believe that some other speech act is involved in the uttering of the interrogative. In any case, one can say that the uttering of the interrogative poses a confirmation question. We also know that the hearer knew beforehand what would be asked, as well as the answer that should be given to the question. This further confirms that the question is part of a formality between the parties.

Thus, an interrogative which seems to pose an information-seeking question stands as a *confirmation-seeking* question in the possible court procedure. Commentators argue that this episode presents a formal meeting between Pharaoh and Joseph's brothers. The analysis of the interrogative from the perspective of speech act theory helps to confirm this interpretation. Because the essential condition of a question is flawed, the reader is compelled to understand it as a confirmation question.

The next interrogative *כַּמָּה יָמֵי שְׁנֵי חַיֶּיךָ* – “How many are the days of the years of your life?” is a simple information seeking question marked by the question word *כַּמָּה* preceded by the preposition *כ*. This is the common way in BH to ask a question about quantity (“how many?”, “how much?”, “how long?”<sup>96</sup> -- see page 30 for the use of the particle with prepositions). However, the hearer gives more information than is requested: “The days of the years of my sojourning are a hundred and thirty years; few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their sojourning.” We do not have enough material in this short episode to determine why the hearer felt that more information should be given. However, for some reason the hearer decides to

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<sup>96</sup> See 2 Sam. 19:35; 1 Kgs. 22:16; 2 Chron. 18:15; Job 7:19; 13:23; 21:17.



“violate” the maxim of quantity – “Do not make your contribution more informative than it is required “( see Table 6 - Grice’s co-operative principle). According to Westermann (1986:170) the asking of the question about Jacob’s age “is not an act of mere curiosity; it is an act of sharing... It is a question of what they have in common” (see Coats 1976:52). Westermann, however, does not provide the grounds on which he based his views. I propose that, as in the analysis of the previous interrogative, more of the context should be explained in order to fully understand the implications of the question/answer pair. One possibility is that Jacob is here humbling himself in order to elicit sympathy (see also self-abasement formulas, page 28). Other similar cases occur in BH (compare, for instance the speeches in 1 Sam 25:10-13 with 25:23-31 and how different is their outcome due to the way the speaker tries to gain sympathy - see 2 Sam 14:5-7; 19:18-23). Thus analysing the interrogative from a *pragmatic perspective* (see the introduction to this chapter) helps to make the reader aware that more should be understood from the context than is actually said in words. It is also important to remark that the co-operative principle and its maxims, although with universal characteristics (it tries to characterise universal principles), are stated with a western mindset which might not reflect the ancient way of communicating. However, if we assume that the principle is universal we have a powerful tool to try to better understand instances of communication such as these, *viz.* where the violation of a maxim is the custom and plays an important sociolinguistic function.

### **Genesis 48:8**

As we pointed out in the introduction to this chapter, scholars disagree regarding the division of the pericopes of Chapter 48. The divisions in the beginning of the chapter, including Genesis 48:8-9, are very problematic in their views. Some commentators point out that verses 3 to 7 are an insertion that interrupts the flow of the text

between verses 2 and 8. It is possible, however, to analyse the interrogative considering only the pair in which it occurs.

*Table 32 - Pericope: Genesis 48:8-9*

48.8 וַיֵּרָא יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת-בְּנֵי יוֹסֵף וַיֹּאמֶר מִי-אֵלֶּה:	Narrative followed by direct speech introduced by single verb frame
48.9 וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף אֶל-אָבִיו בְּנֵי הֵם אֲשֶׁר-נָתַן-לִי אֱלֹהִים בְּנֹה וַיֹּאמֶר קָחֵם-נָא אֵלַי וְאֶבְרָכֵם:	Direct speech introduced by single verb frame - direct speech introduced by single verb frame

One finds a full adjacency pair in verses 8b/9a and an incomplete adjacency pair in 9b/10. This last one is completed by a narrative response (it is a request that is described in the actions of the hearer – “Bring them to me, I pray you, that I may bless them”... “So Joseph brought them near him”). The first pair presents a clear question/answer pair. The interrogative is introduced by the question word *מי* – *מי-אלה* – “Who are these?” and promptly answered by the hearer. All conditions for questions (preparatory, sincerity and essential) are met, thus the interrogative is used to pose a real information-seeking question.

## CONCLUSIONS

After analysing the apparently answered interrogatives in the JN we may draw some conclusions about our findings in this section (in the table below are included also the interrogatives that are apparently answered which are presented in the next section).

*Table 33 - Interrogatives used to perform the speech act question*

Pericope	Text	Hebrew Markers	Adjacency pairs 1st part / 2nd part	Function
37:12-17	37:15	מַה־	1st / dialogue continues	Real question
	37:16	אֵיפֹה	1st / dialogue continues	Real question
37:23-30	37:30	אָנָּה	1st / pragmatic response	Real question
37:31-33	37:32	הַכֶּתָּנָה	1st / narrative response + dialogue continues	Real question
38:15-23	38:16	מַה־	1st / dialogue continues	Real question
	38:18	מָה	1st / dialogue continues	Real question
	38:21	אֵי־הָ	1st / dialogue continues	Real question
40:7-9	40:7	מִדּוּעַ	1st / dialogue continues	Real question
42:1-17	42:7	מֵאַיִן	1st / dialogue continues	Real question
42:27-28	42:28	מַה־	2nd / end speech	Make statement/ Real question
43:26-34	43:27	הַעוֹדְנוּ / הַשְׁלוֹם	1st / dialogue continues	Real question
	43:29	הָזָה	1st / same character / silent pragmatic response	Real question
44:14-34	44:19	הֵי־שֶׁ	1st / dialogue continues	Real question
45:1-3	45:3	הַעוֹד	1st / Narrative response	Real question /Confirmation
47:1-10	46:33	מַה־	Instruction	
	47:3	מַה־	1st / dialogue continues	Real question /Confirmation
	47:8	כִּמָּה	1st / dialogue continues	Real question
48:8-9	48:8	מִי־	1st / dialogue continues	Real question

This group of 19 interrogatives (18 verses) represents less than 40% of the total number of interrogatives in the JN. One of them (42:28) is used to perform more than one speech act at a time (make a statement and ask a question) and appears also in Table 28 - Interrogatives used to perform speech acts other than question.

Observing the interrogatives in the sample text that are used to perform the speech act question, we note the characteristics listed in the following paragraphs:

In general, the speech act question is performed by the utterance of only one interrogative sentence in contrast to interrogatives that are used to perform speech acts other than questions, which present a higher tendency to be grouped (see 37:8, 10; 43:7; 44:15 and 16). The exception in the sample text is 43:27 in which the two interrogatives seek a similar answer.



We do not find among the interrogatives above (Table 33) some interrogative particle/words that are used to perform speech acts other than questions, *viz.* למָה/אֵיךְ/הֲלוֹא. This might indicate that they could be used exclusively or mostly in interrogatives that are used to perform speech acts other than real information seeking-questions (but see footnote 76).

Observing the relation *function* in contrast to the placement of the utterance in the pairing of the dialogue one finds that interrogatives used to pose real questions mostly occur in the first pair part of an adjacency pair (forming a question/answer pair). The only exception in the sample text is 42:28 (the מָה זֹאת formula - see footnote 82). All other cases are followed by a clear second pair or a narrative/pragmatic response.

#### ALLEGEDLY UNMARKED QUESTIONS

This last section deals with the interrogatives in Chapter 38, which are dealt with separately because of the ambiguity created by one sentence in the corpus that is translated in RSV as a question (38:17b). It also introduces a broader issue that is investigated further in the second part of this section, *viz.* unmarked questions in BH. Although I conclude below that verse 17b is not a question at all, I propose to investigate further the matter of the allegedly unmarked questions in BH since it is an assumed reality by most grammars. Using the theoretical framework of speech act theory to further investigate these “questions” allows one to be more precise regarding their function.

Most BH grammars state that “the interrogative particles are not necessary to characterise a question” (see page 20 and footnote 22). If this statement is true, questions in BH can be posed by an utterance in the form of a statement. Such a sentence cannot be characterised as an interrogative in a written discourse; thus,

some sort of sign or indication that a question is involved must be given to the reader/hearer of the utterance<sup>97</sup> to identify it as a question. The possible indications are intonation, context (narrative frame and direct speech frame) and word order (see page 21).

It is known that in some languages intonation is a clear way of indicating a question (sometimes even an “ungrammatical” sentence in English can be used to pose a question as long as intonation is present – “You are OK?” with rising pitch in the end of the sentence). We pointed out earlier that in Portuguese there is no rule on word order change between statements and many interrogatives<sup>98</sup> (although VOS is more common for questions and SVO more common for statements), and intonation is sometimes the only clue the listener has to know that the utterance is a question. In the case of written discourse the indication may be the sole use of the interrogation mark. Thus the sentences *Vai bem o jovem Absalão?* (Is it well with the young man Absalom? 2 Sam 18:29a) and *Vai bem o Jovem Absalão* (The young man Absalom is well) have an identical word order (VOS), but the former is an interrogative and the latter a statement (although *O Jovem Absalão vai bem* (SVO) is preferred for statements).

As far as is known BH does not have a sign equivalent to the interrogation mark in most western languages. This leaves the reader without clues as to when a question is being posed in statement form (the situation could be different in live speech where intonational patterns could be applied and the question be clearly marked by such means). However, the modern reader has no means to know whether or not these patterns were used in BH (although intonational patterns are considered universal by many linguists -- see the chapter What Do We Know About Questions?).

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<sup>97</sup> One must remember that we limit the term *interrogative* to the syntactic characteristics of certain sentences.

Another possible indication that a sentence uttered in statement form is posing a question is the context in which it occurs. In narrative the narrator can clearly indicate in the verb frame the speech act performed ("He asked") or other instances where a statement does not make any sense at all in the context.

The third possibility, word order, is proposed by Joüon-Muraoka. According to them the word order of such questions is different from the preferred word order for statements. We consider this possibility in the analysis of the alleged unmarked questions in BH.

However, checking the alleged unmarked questions against the set of rules for questions within speech act theory may help one ascertain whether or not questions are involved in these cases.

Thus, we describe the interrogatives in Chapter 38 and the alleged unmarked question in 17b and then we further extend the discussion to a few other allegedly unmarked questions as they are presented in Table 2 - Alleged non-marked questions in Biblical Hebrew, page 34.<sup>99</sup>

### **Genesis 38:16, 17, 18 and 21**

As we pointed out above, the interrogatives in this chapter are discussed separately because of the particular character of the sentence in verse 17b which is normally translated as a question but has no interrogative marker. Scholars are divided regarding the setting of the passage. Some believe that the setting of the chapter has little or nothing to do directly with the Joseph narrative (see Westermann

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<sup>98</sup> Written interrogative sentences in Portuguese are often only marked by an interrogation mark.

<sup>99</sup> In Table 2 one finds only the alleged unmarked questions as they are pointed out by some grammars (50 in total). However, this number differs according to different translations. For instance, none of the grammar books we have checked points to Gen 38:17 as an example of an unmarked question, although RSV translates the sentence as a question (see the introductory note on Table 2). Mitchell (1908:115-129) points out 71 cases of which only 19 correspond to those in Table 2. That brings the number of allegedly unmarked questions to 102.

1986:49). Others believe it is integrated into the narrative (see Sternberg 1985:414). Verses 1 to 15 explain a situation which gives place to the plot presented in the verses of the pericope below:

Table 34 - Pericope: Genesis 38:15-23

38.15 וַיִּרְאֶה יְהוּדָה וַיַּחְשְׁבֶהָ לְזוֹנָה כִּי כִסְתָה פָנֶיהָ:	Narrative
38.16 וַיֵּט אֵלֶיהָ אֶל-הַדֶּרֶךְ וַיֹּאמֶר הֲכֵה-נָא אֲבוֹא אֵלָיךְ כִּי לֹא יָדַע כִּי כִלְתּוֹ הוּא וַתֹּאמֶר מַה-תִּתֶּן-לִי כִּי תָבוֹא אֵלָי:	Narrative followed by direct speech introduced by single verb frame - Narrative followed by direct speech introduced by single verb frame - interrogative
38.17 וַיֹּאמֶר אָנֹכִי אֲשַׁלַּח גְּדִי-עֲזִים מִן-הַצֹּאן וַתֹּאמֶר אִם-תִּתֶּן עֲרֻכּוֹן עַד שְׁלַחְךָ:	Direct speech introduced by single verb frame - Direct speech introduced by single verb frame - alleged unmarked question
38.18 וַיֹּאמֶר מַה הָעֲרֻכּוֹן אֲשֶׁר אֶתֶן-לָךְ וַתֹּאמֶר חֲתָמְךָ וּפְתִילְךָ וּמִטָּה אֲשֶׁר בִּידְךָ וַיִּתֶּן-לָהּ וַיָּבֹא אֵלֶיהָ וַתַּהַר לּוֹ:	Direct speech introduced by single verb frame - interrogative - Direct speech introduced by single verb frame - Narrative
38.19 וַתִּקֶּם וַתֵּלֶךְ וַתִּסֶּר צַעֲיָפָה מֵעֲלֶיהָ וַתִּלְבָּשׁ בְּגָדֵי אִלְמָנוּתָהּ:	Narrative
38.20 וַיִּשְׁלַח יְהוּדָה אֶת-גְּדֵי הָעֲזִים בְּיַד רַעְהוּ הָעֶדְלָמִי לְקַחַת הָעֲרֻכּוֹן מִיַּד הָאִשָּׁה וְלֹא מָצָאָהּ:	Narrative
38.21 וַיִּשְׁאַל אֶת-אִנְשֵׁי מְקוֹמָהּ לֵאמֹר אֵיךְ הִקְדַּשְׁתָּ הוּא עַל-הַדֶּרֶךְ וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֹא-הִיְתָה בָּזָה קִדְשָׁהּ: בְּעֵינֵינוּ:	Direct speech introduced by <i>lê'môr</i> frame - interrogative - Direct speech introduced by single verb frame - choral
38.22 וַיָּשָׁב אֶל-יְהוּדָה וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא מָצָאתִיהָ וְגַם אִנְשֵׁי הַמְּקוֹם אָמְרוּ לֹא-הִיְתָה בָּזָה קִדְשָׁהּ:	Narrative followed by direct speech introduced by single verb frame
38.23 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוּדָה תְּקַח-לָהּ פֶּן נִהְיָה לְבוֹז הַגֹּי שְׁלַחְתִּי הַגְּדִי הַזֶּה וְאַתָּה לֹא מָצָאתָהּ:	Direct speech introduced by single verb frame

The first interrogative (verse 16) occurs in a complex dialogue. In the first part of the dialogue Judah proposes to have intercourse with a prostitute standing on the side of the road. He did not know that the prostitute was his daughter-in-law disguised as such. The request is followed by the interrogative in which Tamar requests information about the man's intention regarding the price to be paid – *מַה-תִּתֶּן-לִי כִּי* – “What will you give me, that you may come in to me?” The utterance of the interrogative poses a clear-cut information-seeking question (S wants information

and counts as an attempt to elicit information from H). The pairing of the question is a clear-cut answer: the hearer gives the information requested upon which the speaker has to make a decision: אֲנֹכִי אֶשְׁלַח גִּדִּי-עֲזִים מִן-הַצֹּאן – “I will send you a kid from the flock.” Although the answer is given, the first speaker is not satisfied with the conditions that are to be fulfilled in the future, upon which a conditional sentence is uttered: אִם-תִּתֶּן עֲרֻבֹן עַד שְׁלַחְךָ: – “If you give me a pledge until you send it.” It is this sentence that RSV and other translations pose as a question: “Will you give me a pledge, till you send it?” (see also KJV, ASV, New KJV etc.). The translation of the sentence as an interrogative is absolutely unnecessary. This is a clear case of ellipsis of the apodosis in conditional sentences - “*I will lie with you* (apodosis) if you give me a pledge until you send it (see Joüon-Muraoka § 167.r). Thus, the sentence does not pose a direct request for information, but poses a condition upon which a state of affairs is dependent. However, the condition is indirectly a request for information. The speaker wants to know if the hearer is willing to comply with a certain condition in order to concede to his initial request. This new condition gives place to another interrogative which poses another information-seeking question: מָה הָעֲרֻבֹן אֲשֶׁר אֶתֶן-לָךְ – “What pledge shall I give you?” (verse 18). Thus, the interrogative serves as a response to the condition imposed in the previous utterance. Implied is the idea that “it depends on what pledge you want.” The new information requested is promptly given by the hearer and the dialogue (which is in fact a negotiation) is resolved in the narrative response that follows: “So he gave them to her, and went in to her, and she conceived by him” which in direct speech would read something like - “Ok, I agree with this pledge, here it is!”, “Well, then I will sleep with you” (and they had intercourse and she conceived from him).

The last interrogative in the pericope, verse 21, is also a clear information-seeking question. Judah sends a friend to turn in his payment (a kid) in order to receive his



pledge back. However, the man does not find the woman and he inquires from the local people: **אֵיךָ הַקְדֵּשָׁה בְּעֵינַיִם הִוא עַל-הַדֶּרֶךְ** – “Where is the harlot who was at Enaim by the wayside?” Not only is the interrogative clear as a question but the narrator also used a *lê'môr* frame indicating the speech act **וַיִּשְׁאַל אֶת-אֲנָשֵׁי מְקוֹמָהּ** **לֵאמֹר**. As there was no answer to the specific question, their response tells the speaker that his question is somehow inappropriate: “No harlot has been here.”

Thus, we find in the pericope three real information-seeking questions and, although some translations translate the sentence in 17b as a question, there is no need to do so since the sentence can be easily understood as a conditional sentence.

### Other Allegedly Unmarked Questions

In order to develop the arguments in this section I will use Mitchell's conclusions in his article *The Omission of the Interrogative Particle* (1908). His conclusions are as follows:

- Of the 71 instances in which sentences without the interrogative marker are posed as questions, 12 are cases of textual corruption and 32 are instances of mistaken exegesis (a question is not really necessary in the context). This leaves out only 27 instances which are really to be considered as cases of unmarked questions.
- Out of these cases he shows that the explanations laid by GKC as criteria for the omission of the interrogative marker do not hold up to close scrutiny. For instance, Gesenius' statement (a) that the omission of the particle “occurs specially before a following guttural for the sake of euphony” does not hold. He shows that BH actually used the interrogative particle before all the gutturals and in almost any possible combination.<sup>100</sup> (b) He shows that the suggestion by Kautzsch that “the natural emphasis upon the words (especially when the most emphatic word is placed at the beginning of the sentence) is by itself sufficient to indicate an interrogative sentence” (GKC § 150.1) also does not hold up to close scrutiny (*cf.* also my remark on Joüon-Muraoka on page 21). Comparing the **marked interrogatives** in the book of Genesis (39 in total) shows that the marked interrogatives have an “irregular” word order in the same frequency as the so-called unmarked interrogatives. This proves that word order cannot stand as criterion for the identification of unmarked interrogatives. A last

<sup>100</sup> See the remark in GKC § 150.1b in which Cowley concedes that Mitchell is right and deletes the statement.

suggestion by grammarians (c) is that “particles are omitted when the question arises from emotion or anxiety in the speaker” (Nordheimer § 1099,4,a [as quoted by Mitchell]) or that “omission of the particle is most common in animated speech, as when any idea is repudiated” (Davidson § 121).<sup>101</sup> According to Mitchell this last position is the only of the above hypothesis that can be verified.

Thus, of the criteria we described in the beginning of this section regarding the possible ways of identifying an unmarked question in BH (intonation, context and word order), the context remains as the only possibility since intonation is impossible to verify. Mitchell (1908:128) classifies the 39 texts (including the ones allegedly unmarked due to textual corruption) into the following categories:<sup>102</sup>

<i>Incredulity, real or feigned:</i> Gen 3:1; <b>18:12</b> ; Jdg 11:9; <b>1 Kgs 1:24</b> ; Job 14:3	5
<i>Irony:</i> <b>1 Sam 21:16</b> ; Hab 2:19; <b>Job 2:10</b> ; 38:18; Lam 3:36    <sup>103</sup> <b>1 Sam 22:7</b> ;	11
<b>Zech 8:6</b> ; Job 11:3; 37:18; (40:25); 40:30	
<i>Sarcasm:</i> <b>1 Kgs 21:7</b> ; Job 2:9;    <b>2 Sam 16:17</b> ; Is 14:10	4
<i>Repugnance:</i> 2 Sam 19:23;    (Ezek 11:13); ( <b>17:9</b> ); ( <b>Prov 5:16</b> )	4
<i>Confidence – expressed:</i>	8
<i>Positively:</i> Prov 22:29; 29:20;    26:12	
<i>Negatively: with reference to –</i>	
<i>Past facts:</i>    ( <b>2 Kgs 5:26</b> ); (Ezek 11:3)	
<i>Present facts or truths:</i>    <b>Lam 3:38</b> ; (Job 30:24)	
<i>Future events:</i>    Hos 10:9	
<i>Denial:</i> <b>1 Sam 22:15</b>	1
<i>Uncertainty:</i> ( <b>Gen 27:24</b> ); ( <b>1 Sam 30:8</b> ); <b>Songs 3:3</b> ;    ( <b>1 Sam 16:4</b> ); ( <b>2 Sam 18:29</b> ); (2 Kgs 19:19)	6
<i>Total</i>	39

Mitchell (1908:127) admits, however, that “It is hardly possible to tabulate the passages in which the particle is omitted in such a way that scholars generally will be satisfied.” However, I will illustrate below that speech act theory may help one to address this problem in two ways, viz. by helping to clarify the classification of these allegedly unmarked interrogatives and to eventually determine the real function of the sentences in their context.

<sup>101</sup> This suggestion is not present in GKC.

<sup>102</sup> The ones marked in bold correspond to examples in Table 2. The texts in parenthesis are the ones unmarked due to textual corruption.

<sup>103</sup> The meaning of this marks “||” in the table are not clear.



One should note that according to Mitchell's classification none of the sentences is used in speech to perform the speech act question since they are not seeking information. He further concludes that out of what he considers the 22 genuine cases of omission of the interrogative particle, 20 fall under the first three headings of the classification (incredulity, irony or sarcasm) and that they "might be called exclamatory questions, and appropriately marked by a double punctuation (!?)" (1908:129). Thus, to start with, Mitchell's "unmarked interrogatives" cannot be classified as real information-seeking questions. If they are interrogatives, they are used to perform a speech act other than a question.

I use for a sample the texts in Mitchell's table above that have matches in Table 2 - Alleged non-marked questions in Biblical Hebrew. I only use the ones that do not fit in the number of texts that are marked as textual corruption. These texts are marked in bold in the table above.

#### Genesis 18:12

18.12 וַתִּצְחַק שָׂרָה בְּקִרְבָּהּ לֵאמֹר  
אַחֲרַי בְּלִתִּי הִיתָה-לִּי עֲדֹנָה וְאֵדְנִי זָקֵן:

So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?"

The context of the utterance is clearly one of incredulity and irony as it is expressed in the *le'môr* frame וַתִּצְחַק שָׂרָה בְּקִרְבָּהּ לֵאמֹר – "So Sarah laughed to herself, saying". The frame also tells the reader that utterance is an inner thought, a soliloquy – בְּקִרְבָּהּ.<sup>104</sup> That one may ask him/herself a question is possible. However, that is not necessarily the case here. Considering that there is no syntactic evidence to read the utterance as a question and no pragmatic need to have it translated as a question, I propose that it should not be taken as such.

<sup>104</sup> See page 95 and footnote 63.

One possible reason why most translations and some grammarians opt for a question here is because of verse 13 in which the Lord states that Sarah said – *הֲאֵךְ אֶמְנֶם אֶלְדּוֹ וְאֲנִי זָקְנָתִי* – “Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?” However, this is intended as a quote of direct speech as expressed in the *lê'môr* frame *לָמַד זֶה צִחְקָה שָׂרָה לֵאמֹר* and the quote itself is radically different in content compared to what the narrator depicts as Sarah’s thought in verse 12. Thus, verse 13 cannot be the basis to understand the sentence in verse 12 as a question which is probably omitted from the text.<sup>105</sup>

Thus a possible translation could be: And Sarah thought laughing “After I have grown old, I may have pleasure,<sup>106</sup> and that when my husband is old!”

#### 1 Kings 1:24

1:24 וַיֹּאמֶר נָתָן אֲדֹנָי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶתָּה  
אֲמַרְתָּ אֲדֹנִיָּהוּ יִמְלֹךְ אַחֲרָי וְהוּא יֹשֵׁב  
עַל-כִּסְאִי

Nathan said, “Have you, my lord the king, declared that Adonijah shall be king after you, and that he will sit on your throne?”

A plot between the prophet and Bathsheba in order to make David take action is described in the beginning of Chapter 1 after Adonijah got support among some people to take over the throne of his father. Bathsheba was to describe what was happening and the prophet was to come in and confirm her words. Verse 24 is Nathan’s first speech after he is introduced to the presence of the king. What he reports to the king was immediately before reported by Bathsheba about Adonijah (verses 25-26):

<sup>105</sup> Note that verse 13 poses a *למה* critical/corrective question.

<sup>106</sup> The translation of the perfect *הִיִּתָּה* is difficult in this sentence. Joüon-Muraoka, who consider the sentence a question (§ 112.j), point out to the same difficulty.

*For he has gone down this day, and has sacrificed oxen, fatlings, and sheep in abundance, and has invited all the king's sons, Joab the commander of the army, and Abiathar the priest; and behold, they are eating and drinking before him, and saying, "Long live King Adonijah!" But me, your servant, and Zadok the priest, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and your servant Solomon, he has not invited.*

It is possible to argue in this case that the sentence in verse 24 poses a statement which describes a current state of affairs. Verses 25 and 26 present the evidence the speaker has to believe what he is describing. Verse 27, which is also translated as a question in RSV, poses an indignant statement expressing the speaker's incredulity in the face of what is happening. Thus, the text would read:

*My lord the king, you must have said, "Adonijah will reign after me and he shall seat on my throne! For he has gone down this day..."*<sup>107</sup>

The fact that the prophet and some of his most close associates were not invited to the party (including Solomon) as he clearly marks in verse 26 brings up the conditional sentence in verse 27 expressing incredulity that the king would have authorised such a thing without letting them know

אֲחֵרָיו אִם מֵאֵת אֲדֹנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ נִהְיָה -- "If this thing had been brought about by my lord the king himself, you did not inform your servants who should sit on the throne of my lord the king after him." DeVries (1985:2) also translates the sentence as a question: "Has this business actually proceeded from my lord the king, while you have not told your servants who is to sit on the throne of my lord the king after him?"

The expected reaction from the king is described in the next verse. He calls Bathsheba back and reaffirms his promise that Solomon should reign in his place.

The *lā'môr* frame וַיֹּאמֶר דָּוִד הַמֶּלֶךְ דָּוִד -- "Then King David answered" which could

<sup>107</sup> Noth (1968:22) says: "Der erste Satz seiner Rede (24) ist nicht als Frage formuliert und wohl auch nicht als Frage gemeint. Mit seiner bewußt falschen Feststellung will er den König zu einer Reaktion zwingen. See also DeVries (1985:2) who translates the sentence "My lord king, you must have said, 'Adonijah shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne.'" He comments (1985:15): "You must have said," אָמַרְתָּ: this could be read as a question (RSV), but it is better handled as an ironic

be better rendered "Then king David responded and said"<sup>108</sup> clearly shows this reaction.

Thus, I propose that, in view of the lack of a syntactic marking and the possibility of reading the text as a statement, 1 Kings 1:24 should be read as a statement and not a question.

### 1 Samuel 21:16

21.16 חָסֵר מְשֻׁעִים אֲנִי כִּי-הִבֵּאתָם  
אֶת-זֶה לְהִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה עָלַי הַזֶּה יָבוֹא  
אֶל-בֵּיתִי ס:

"Do I lack madmen, that you have brought this fellow to play the madman in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house?"

The previous verse (15) ends with a critical/corrective למה after an observation—  
"Lo, you see the man is mad; why then have you brought him to me?" We know that critical corrective interrogatives do not expect an answer but expect a change in behaviour. In this case the speaker continues to speak and ironically answers the criticism: "I lack madman! For you brought this fellow to play madman in my presence. He comes to my house! I can't believe it!"

### Job 2:10

2.10 וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֶיהָ כְּדַבֵּר אֶתֶּת  
הַנְּכִלּוֹת תְּדַבְּרִי גַם אֶת-הַטּוֹב וְנִקְבַּל  
מֵאֵת הָאֱלֹהִים וְאֶת-הָרָע לֹא נִקְבַּל  
בְּכָל-זֹאת לֹא-חָטָא אִיּוֹב בְּשִׁפְתָיו פ:

But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

Most translations opt for an interrogative reading here, posing the utterance as a rhetorical question from Job to his wife. However, grammatically the text allows for a

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exaggeration.

<sup>108</sup> For this use of ענה in *le'môr* frames see page 118.

statement-like translation: "We accept good from the hand of God but evil we do not accept." The problem is that the sentence does not make sense in its context as a statement with the verb קבל rendered as "to accept". Also a problem is the presence of גם in the beginning of the sentence. Some commentators suggest (*cf.* Tur-Sinai 1967:27) that גם את should be read with the previous sentence with the vocalisation גם את, thus translating "Thou, too, speakest as one of the wicked women speaketh." That would make the alleged interrogative an easier reading. Tur-Sinai, however, comments on this suggestion that "in this case we may have to assume the omission of את or הָאֵת at the beginning of the next sentence, too, *where it is needed to introduce the question*: "shall we receive" etc." (my italics).

However, if the verb can be rendered as "receive"<sup>109</sup> not in the sense of acceptance, then the sentence makes sense as a statement: We receive good from the hand of God, but not evil (not because we can accept or not, but because God does not give evil). That would also explain the use of the גם particle which can be translated as "moreover" adding support to the preceding argument (see Van der Merwe *et al.* § 41.4.5.2.i.d), that Job's wife is speaking like a wicked women that does not know what she is speaking about. Thus, the dialogue would read as follows: "Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God, and die." But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. I cannot curse God! Moreover, we receive good at the hand of God, but not evil." In all this Job did not sin with his lips."

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<sup>109</sup> The term is translated in the Authorised Version as receive (6), took (3), choose (1), held (1), take hold (1), undertook (1). BDB (page 867) renderings are, take, choose, receive, accept, assume an obligation.



## 1 Samuel 22:7-8

22.7 וַיֹּאמֶר שָׁאוּל לְעִבְדָּיו הַנֹּצְעִים  
עֲלִיו שְׂמְעוּ-נָא בְנֵי יְמִינִי<sup>110</sup> גַם-לְכַלְכֶּם  
יִתֵּן בֶּן-יִשִׁי שְׂדֹת וְכַרְמִים לְכַלְכֶּם  
יָשִׁים שָׂרֵי אֲלָפִים וְשָׂרֵי מֵאוֹת:

22.8 כִּי קִשְׁרָתָם כָּלְכָם עָלַי  
וְאִין-גִּלְהָ אֶת-אֲזִנִּי בְכֶרֶת-בְּנֵי  
עַם-בֶּן-יִשִׁי וְאִין-חָלָה מִכֶּם עָלַי וְגִלְהָ  
אֶת-אֲזִנִּי כִי הָקִים בְּנֵי אֶת-עִבְדִּי עָלַי  
לְאַרְבַּ פִּיּוֹם הַזֶּה ס:

And Saul said to his servants who stood about him, "Hear now, you Benjaminites; will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, will he make you all commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds,

that all of you have conspired against me? No one discloses to me when my son makes a league with the son of Jesse, none of you is sorry for me or discloses to me that my son has stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait, as at this day."

Similar to 1 Kgs 1:24 and 1 Sam 21:15 the alleged interrogative is followed by a כִּי clause. In both previous cases we concluded that the כִּי clause presents evidence regarding the preceding statement. I propose that the same occurs here. Ironically Saul makes the statement: "Hear now, you Benjaminites! Also the son of Jesse will give every one of you fields and vineyards! He will make you all commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds! *I say this* for you all conspired against me!..." The evidence is also ironical and both are hypothetical statements by which the speaker tries to stir a reaction from the hearers. We have that reaction displayed in verse 9 which is introduced by עֲנֵה in a *lê'môr* frame, similar to 1 Kings 1:24. Observe that there is no real answer to a question, but a reaction to the previous hypothetical statements.

<sup>110</sup> The rendering of the particle in this context is very difficult. Most translations simply ignore it. Van der Merwe (1990:171) in his investigation of the particle points to this instance as a problematic one.

## Zechariah 8:6

8.6 כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת כִּי יִפְלֹא  
בְּעֵינַי שְׁאֲרִית הָעָם הַזֶּה בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם  
גַּם-בְּעֵינַי יִפְלֹא נָאִם יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת פִּי

Thus says the LORD of hosts:  
If it is marvellous in the sight of  
the remnant of this people in  
these days, should it also be  
marvellous in my sight, says  
the LORD of hosts?

LXX brings a quite different reading of this text which has an interrogative sentence in the second part (adopted by New RSV). BHS suggests הֲגַם introducing the second part of the sentence, giving to it an interrogative marking without further explanation. Some commentaries point to similar readings that are, however, marked as interrogatives (cf. Rudolph 1976:148 – Gen 18:14; Jer 32:27).

I propose, however, that it is possible to read the text as a statement and not a question: "Thus says the Lord, "Because it is marvellous in the sight of the remnant of this people in these days, it will be marvellous too in my sight, says the LORD of hosts."" The preceding verses give a beautiful description of how the Lord will bless Jerusalem and how He will return and dwell in the city. The sentence makes perfect sense in that context.

## 1 Kings 21:7

21.7 וַתֹּאמֶר אֵלֶּיּוּ אִיזָבֶל אִשְׁתּוֹ  
אֵתָהּ עֲתָה תַעֲשֶׂה מְלוּכָה עַל-יִשְׂרָאֵל  
לֶחֶם וְיֵטֵב לִבְךָ לֵאמֹר אֲנִי אֶתֶּן לְךָ  
אֶת-כָּרֶם נָבוֹת הַיִּזְרְעֵלִית

And Jezebel his wife said to him, "Do you now govern Israel? Arise, and eat bread, and let your heart be cheerful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite."

The context of the passage shows clearly that the sentence can be handled as an ironic statement instead of an interrogative. Jezebel, the speaker, portrayed as a mischievous character, despises what she considers a weakness of her husband Ahab, king of Samaria (verse 1). After he tries to acquire a vineyard from Naboth



without success he gets back to his palace in a state of depression. After inquiring from him about his state, Jezebel utters the sentence translated as an interrogative by RSV (and most other English translations). The text can be easily translated: "And Jezebel his wife said to him, "You now, you will really govern Israel! Get up and put yourself together! I will give you the vineyard of Naboth."<sup>111</sup> After that Jezebel acts in her husband's name to create a plot to kill Naboth and take possession of his vineyard.

## 2 Samuel 16:17

וַיֹּאמֶר אֲבִשָּׁלוֹם אֶל-חֹשִׁיָּהוּ 16:17  
חֲסִדְךָ אֶת-רֵעִי לָמָּה לֹא-הִלַּכְתָּ אֶת-רֵעִי:

16:17 And Absalom said to Hushai, "Is this your loyalty to your friend? Why did you not go with your friend?"

I cannot see any reason not to interpret the sentence which RSV and other translations translate as interrogative as an ironic statement. There is no interrogative marking and it makes full sense if translated: "This is your loyalty to your friend! Why did you not go with him?" Note that the second sentence introduced by a למה question word has also an ironic tone (see the interpretation of the למה in Gen 42:1). The hearer, however, gives an explanation to the speaker in terms of his loyalty.

## Lamentations 3:38

מִפִּי עֲלִיּוֹן לֹא תֵצֵא הַרְעוֹת וְהַטּוֹב: 3.38

Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that good and bad come?

As the translation stands in RSV one would expect a הלוֹא particle in the beginning of the sentence. That would, however, interfere with the acrostic of the poem. Due to

<sup>111</sup> DeVries (1985:253) translates: "You now: you are going to perform majesty over Israel ..."

the fact that a different construction is used and explained by commentators as the use of “asseverative” or emphatic *lamed*. Hillers (1972:58) states: “Since in this (37) and the following verse it is obvious that the poet means to assert positively that God does command both good and bad, one must look on the *lō*’ in each line as either: (a) a negative, “not”, and read the lines as rhetorical questions, or (b) asseverative or emphatic *lamed*’s.” Hillers prefers the second option which reads: “Both bad and good take place at the command of the Most High.” Thus, one finds an alternative to the reading of the sentence as an interrogative. Gottlieb (1978:50) regards the occurrence of the asseverative *lamed* in BH as well established. LXX, however, understood the sentence as a statement: ἐκ στόματος ὑψίστου οὐκ ἐξελεύσεται τὰ κακὰ καὶ τὸ ἀγαθόν.

Thus, in this case as in many others above, there is another possibility to read the sentences as statements rather than as a question.

### 1 Samuel 22:15

22:15 הַיּוֹם הַחֲלֵתִי לִי־שְׂאוֹל־  
 לִי־שְׂאוֹל־לֹא בְּאֱלֹהִים חָלִילָה לִּי  
 אֶל־יֵשׁעַ הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּעִבְדּוֹ דְּבַר בְּכָל־בֵּית  
 אָבִי כִּי לֹא־יָדַע עֲבָדְךָ בְּכָל־זֹאת דְּבַר  
 קָטָן אִו גָּדוֹל:

Is today the first time that I have inquired of God for him? No! Let not the king impute anything to his servant or to all the house of my father; for your servant has known nothing of all this, much or little.

The sentence translated as an interrogative in verse 15 occurs in the middle of an explanation by Ahimelech regarding his encounter with David. He was accused by Saul of conspiracy and he knew his life was in danger. Saul uses a *למה* interrogative in which he criticises and at the same time seeks an explanation for the priest's attitude (critical corrective). A sarcastic or ironic statement proves to be a difficult reading to the sentence in the context. The man was speaking to the king and speaking for his own life. This context leaves the reader with the sole option of

reading the sentence as an interrogative. The use of הַלִּילָה shows that the speaker answers his own question. This would leave us with a case of unmarked interrogative. However, Mitchell (1908:128) points out that “while it is true that the Hebrews do not seem to have hesitated to prefix הַ to any of the gutturals, whatever the vocalisation, actually using it before הַ in at least 5 cases, it does not occur before the article. It is probable, therefore, that such a use was avoided, not on account of the guttural, but because it would bring together two very similar particles. If this conjecture be adopted, it will explain 1 Samuel 22:15, and furnish an alternative reason for the omission of the particle in 2 Samuel 19:23/22.”<sup>112</sup> Mitchell’s suggestion for the omission of the interrogative particle seems acceptable in this case, considering that another reading of the text proves difficult. He classifies the question under the heading “denial”. I propose that this is an argumentative question, one that the speaker himself intends to answer as part of an argument or the answer is clear from the context (for argumentative questions see the interpretation of Gen 37:26; 47:15. 19).

### Songs 3:3

3.3 מְצֹאוֹנִי הַשְׁמָרִים הַסִּבְכִּים בְּעִיר אֶת שְׂאֵהָבָה  
וּפְשִׁי רָאִיתָם:

The sentinels found me, as  
they went about in the city.  
“Have you seen him whom my  
soul loves?”

It seems that commentaries and translations are unanimous regarding the translation of the second part of this verse as a question (cf. RSV, New RSV, KJV, NIV, Keel 1994:124, Stadelmann 1990:92 – Stadelmann remarks on the sentence: “In place of an interrogative particle to introduce the sentence, the direct object is put at the

<sup>112</sup> Of the 786 times in which the sequence \*הַה occurs at the beginning of words in BHS the sequence \*הַה occurs only 5 times (Num 22:30; 1 Chron 5:10, 19, 20; 27:31). In Num 22:30 the  $\omega$  suggests הַה instead of הַהֶסֶן which would bring the number down to 4, all of them in 1 Chronicles.

beginning for the sake of emphasis").<sup>113</sup> Apparently commentators and translators followed the *LXX* in the understanding of the sentence. It is possible to argue, by clues in the context, that the speaker wants that information – “I will rise now and go about the city, in the streets and in the squares; I will seek him whom my soul loves. I sought him, but found him not”.

However, it is possible that the speaker is making a statement. Firstly, there is absolutely no indication of an answer to a question (no direct answer, pragmatic or narrative response). Secondly, a statement would be a reasonable possibility because the guards are the ones who should know what is happening in the city. Thus, when she meets them she utters the statement, “You must have seen him whom my soul loves!” But as the speaker gets no reaction, she goes on in the search for her lover.

Thus, as in the preceding cases, the reading of the sentence as a statement makes good sense in the context.

## CONCLUSIONS

We investigated above 11 cases of allegedly unmarked interrogatives plus the one in Genesis 38:17. These are the findings of the investigation:

Text	Mitchell's Classification All interrogatives	Conclusions
Gen 38:17	Not applicable	Conditional sentence
Gen 18:12	Incredulity	Irony statement of incredulity
1 Kgs 1:24	Incredulity	Irony statement
1 Sam 21:16	Irony	Irony statement
Job 2:19	Irony	Strong statement
1 Sam 22:7	Irony	Irony statement
Zech 8:6	Irony	Statement
1 Kgs 21:7	Sarcasm	Irony statement
2 Sam 16:17	Sarcasm	Irony statement
Lam 3:38	Confidence	Statement
1 Sam 22:15	Denial	Argumentative question
Songs 3:3	Uncertainty	Statement

<sup>113</sup> This remark by Stadelmann (1990:92), however, does not shed any light to the question why the sentence should be interpreted as an interrogative.

Of all the cases above only 1 Samuel 22:15 has an explanation for the sentence to be an unmarked interrogative. All other cases can be understood as some sort of statement, ironic or not. One should notice that from the point of view of speech acts none of the alleged unmarked interrogatives analysed above has an apparent answer. Also, none of them fulfils the essential condition for questions (S wants information). Most probably other cases of alleged unmarked interrogatives in BH may prove to be difficult readings as statements. However, as shown above, in most cases the translation of the sentences as interrogatives is unnecessary, and in some cases wrong. That speakers in BH use interrogatives to perform many different sorts of speech acts it is clear from our study. However, that unmarked sentences are to be classified as interrogatives sentences is a point that grammar books will have to deal further in view of the evidence above. I propose that generic statements of the sort "A question need not necessarily be introduced by a special interrogative pronoun or adverb" (GKC § 150.1 a) be reviewed. Mitchell (1908:129) proposes that "If, therefore, one were required to make a statement on the subject [the omission of the  $\eta$  interrogative], one would have to say *that in direct single or initial questions  $\eta$  is omitted before the article*, and sometimes in exclamatory questions for the purpose of indicating more clearly the incredulity, irony, or sarcasm which prompted them, but which can be adequately expressed only by the human voice" (my italics). I propose that the only statement that holds up to close scrutiny is the one marked in italics in the sentence above. All other cases are to be taken on an individual basis and analysed in their context. The idea of the omission of the particle  $\eta$  "for the purpose of indicating *more clearly* the incredulity, irony, or sarcasm which prompted them, but which can be adequately expressed only by the human voice" (my italics) presents serious problems. Firstly, these functions (incredulity, irony, sarcasm) are expressed by many marked interrogatives in BH as Mitchell (1908:129) admits.



Secondly, we are dealing with written text, hence the idea that an unmarked interrogative would express *more clearly* these functions is inconsistent. The reality is that the alleged unmarked interrogatives in the written text make the function of the sentence less clear. As we pointed out before, we cannot study questions in BH based on any intonational criteria (see page 12).

Regarding the translation of the so-called unmarked interrogatives in BH one can assume that in some cases the statements in BH can be translated as questions and yet be a good rendering of the original speech act, e.g. to perform an ironic or sarcastic statement, however, via an indirect speech act. What should not happen is that the choice in the translation should influence the description of the language itself. I think this is what happened with the so-called unmarked interrogatives in BH.



## **CHAPTER 4**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

One must remember that this is a case study in which a theoretical frame of reference is applied in seeking the solution to a problem or testing a set of hypotheses concerning BH interrogatives and questions within a limited corpus. The study does not propose to be the last word in the field stated in the title (Interrogatives in Biblical Hebrew). What we propose is to offer possible and viable solutions to the stated problem(s) through the consistent application of a theoretical frame of reference as developed (mainly) by Austin, Searle and Schiffrin.

What is the problem that was investigated? The following set of questions was posed initially:

- How can one recognise an interrogative in BH?
- How can one recognise what function an interrogative has in BH?

We started by observing the description of interrogatives and questions in general and then narrowed the field to observe the description of interrogatives and questions in BH. The first part of the observation (interrogatives and questions in general) provided a frame to guide us through the subsequent analysis. It described how interrogative sentences are marked and identified in other languages, providing comparative elements to the description of interrogatives in BH. The second part of our investigation (interrogatives and questions in BH) showed that most traditional grammars<sup>114</sup> present a mix of form and function in their description of interrogatives. We are indebted to these grammarians for most of our knowledge of BH. However, a few problems are present in their descriptions of interrogatives in BH. One of them is

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<sup>114</sup> We basically worked with GKC, WO and Joüon-Muraoka. Along the way other major grammars were consulted such as Brockelmann (1956), Davidson (1902) and Sperber (1966).

due to the fact that form and function do not always correlate (e.g. an interrogative sentence when uttered does not always imply that the speaker is asking a question). One finds that the statements regarding the functions of interrogatives are confusing and, sometimes, even contradictory. For instance, GKC (§ 150 d) states that “The particle  $\pi$  stands primarily before the simple question, when the questioner is wholly uncertain as to the answer to be expected ... In other cases  $\pi$  is used before questions, to which, from their tone and contents, a negative answer is expected ...” In the same paragraph (§ 150 e) it is also remarked that “a few passages deserve special mention, in which the use of the interrogative is altogether different from our idiom, since it serves merely to express the conviction that the contents of the statement are well known to the hearer ...” Just in these few lines one finds at least three different uses for the interrogative particle  $\pi$ , which are not basically wrong, but confusing. How can one ascertain which use is to be understood in a particular passage? Which criteria are to be used when one approaches a sentence marked by the particle? Not only that, but other types of interrogatives (marked by question words) also have similar functions, which adds to the confusion in this type of description.

Another problem that emerged in these descriptions is related to the alleged unmarked interrogatives in BH. Most grammars assume that there is such a type of interrogative in BH. Since an “unmarked” sentence is apparently involved, there is no hard evidence for their existence, only a possibility. Once again, there is a lack of more specific criteria for identifying such interrogatives.

Terminology proves to be a major problem when one approaches some traditional grammars, again due the lack of distinction between form and function. When grammarians refer to “interrogatives” and “questions” it is difficult to identify whether

they are referring to form or function. Coming back to GKC, for instance, the heading of paragraph 150 reads *Interrogative Sentences* and the very first line begins with the statement “A *question* need not necessarily be introduced by a special...” That is one reason why we proposed at the very beginning of this work to use the term “interrogative” to refer to *form* and the term “question” to refer to *function*. Still on the subject of terminology, one often finds ill-defined terms used in the descriptions of interrogatives in BH. For instance, “exclamatory and rhetorical questions” are terms used without a clear-cut definition of their exact functions. We demonstrated above that definitions such as “Rhetorical questions aim not to gain information but to give information with passion” are insufficient in face of the number of distinct functions that interrogatives present, not only in BH but in any language (see page 87 above).

Thus, the main problem I found in most descriptions is that they are not restricted to the description of the syntax, and that they do not clearly distinguish between different levels of linguistic description but they mix syntactic and pragmatic concepts.<sup>115</sup>

In order to overcome these problems we proposed to apply speech act theory to interrogative sentences in their context and investigate their relations. Our choice of speech act theory was founded on the hypothesis that such a theory could provide us with a set of rules that would serve as the criteria for identifying the functions of the many interrogatives in the sample text. To overcome the theoretical problems of the original works of Austin and Searle (see Mey 1993:170) we proposed to use a recent version of speech act theory to extend the analysis beyond the boundaries of sentences and include other factors such as social and societal contexts. We used a

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<sup>115</sup> I must refer here to the work of Van der Merwe *et al.* (1996) as an exception in terms of the levels of linguistic description. For instance, this work describes the interrogative particle  $\pi$  on different levels: it first describes the morphology and then a few possible semantic and pragmatic functions (§ 43.2).

model similar to Schiffrin's approach in her book *Approaches to Discourse* (1994) to analyse the relations and sequences of speech acts related to the interrogatives that we investigated. Thus, in addition to the basic proposition of speech act theory (that one does things with words, speech acts, and "that these acts are in general made possible by and are performed in accordance with certain rules for the use of linguistic elements" (Searle 1969:16)), Schiffrin (1994:61) proposes to analyse "how speech act function contributes to sequential coherence, and how the speech act function of one utterance contributes to that of another."

Two basic questions are asked in the approach to the proposed corpus: (i) how to identify an utterance as a particular speech act; (ii) how an initial speech act creates an environment in which a next speech act is (or is not) appropriate. These are the two steps that we followed throughout the JN whenever we could identify an interrogative sentence according to the description given in the grammar books (surface-level criteria). The results provided considerable new insights into the study of interrogatives in BH.

They showed that more than a half of the interrogatives in the JN are used to perform speech acts other than questions. Whether that same percentage applies to BH as whole is a question yet to be answered. However, one should expect that many interrogatives in BH are not used to ask real information-seeking questions. That should make the BH reader aware of secondary possibilities whenever a clearly marked interrogative is presented in the text.

As we mentioned above (Conclusions page 145ff.) it is not worth trying a classification of questions based on the interrogative markers because form and function do not always correlate. In our sample text interrogatives marked by (למה/מה/הלווא/ה) are used for statements and also criticism. At the same time most

of them are also used to pose real information-seeking questions. Thus, trying to describe the function of each particle individually would lead to the same sort of confusing statements one finds in some grammar books. There are some general statements that can be made regarding some particles that were studied in the sample analysis. However, it is important to know beforehand if one is dealing with a direct or an indirect speech act.

- In the sample text we found that למה questions are only used to perform indirect speech acts (however, one can find real information-seeking למה interrogatives in BH - see footnote 76). In the sample text they appear in two different classes - criticism (4 times) and statements (2 times).
- The question word איך also only appears in indirect speech acts in the sample text (3 times). We know, however, that it is also used to pose real information-seeking questions (2 Sam 1:5; 1 Kgs 12:6 - see footnote 67), although it is very seldom that the particle is used to ask real questions.
- The question word מה is used for both direct and indirect speech acts. A particularly interesting use of it in indirect speech acts is in formulaic constructions. The formula consists of the question word מה plus the demonstrative זאת and followed by a form of the root עשה. This formula has a multi-functional character. We concluded that it is used to make a clear statement about a state of affairs and seek an explanation. When the hearer is also the one that performed or performs the action expressed in the context by the verb עשה, a third speech act is involved: criticism (see the analysis of 42:28).



- Regarding interrogatives marked by הָ we also found that the string הָ interrogative (sometimes הָלוֹא) + infinite absolute + [perfect or imperfect or participle] of the same verbal root of the infinite absolute is frequently used in BH to perform the speech act criticism (see footnote 85 for examples).

Another finding of our research concerns the so-called unmarked interrogatives in BH. We showed that the generic statements that interrogative sentences in BH need not be marked do not hold up to close scrutiny. We found only one case in which an interrogative is not marked, viz. when it would precede the definite article. All other cases of alleged unmarked interrogatives present possible secondary explanations. Some are possible textual corruptions and the others are possibly mistakenly read as interrogatives. In most cases the alleged unmarked interrogative is taken as such because of the “traditional” readings of those texts, thus based solely on interpretation without a solid syntactic basis.

One must admit, however, that according to speech act theory it is possible that a sentence in statement form could be used to ask a question (an indirect speech act). If that happens in BH (this analysis is beyond the scope of our work) these sentences should be described as indirect speech acts performed in the utterance of statements and not as unmarked interrogatives.

This last remark brings us to the final comments regarding the methodological approach of this work: speech act theory. There are serious problems that must be addressed regarding the theory. One basic problem is the taxonomy of speech acts. There is no agreement among linguists about a taxonomy for speech acts. The many different theorists who approached speech acts presented a wide range of possibilities, starting from Austin and Searle themselves (see Bach & Harnish 1979,



Ballmer & Brennenstuhl 1981). This last work argues in general that a classification of speech acts should be language specific.

Another problem that emerges from the theory itself concerns the relation between form and function. We concluded that one utterance can be used to perform more than one speech act (see Gen 39:9; 42:28). Those speech acts count as different acts (refuse a command and rebuke / make a statement and ask a question). These cases represent a *one-to-many relationship* (one form, many functions). Other cases (Gen 37:8, 10; 44:16) represent a *many-to-one relationship* (many forms, one function). Following Schiffrin (1994:88) these relations make it difficult to "provide criteria allowing us to decide what counts (or doesn't count) as an instance of a speech act in such a way that other investigators would identify the act in the same way." For instance, in a one-to-many relationship it is possible that a described function is only a by-product of another speech act (one could say that a rebuttal implies a counter-criticism). In this case, should the two apparent functions be labelled separately or the secondary function (criticism) be labelled as a by-product of the first speech act? Other cases are more clear cut, as in our sample analysis (42:28) we concluded that two different speech acts were performed in the utterance of a single sentence. The two acts (statement and question) are not directly related (like requests and questions - see Table 14 - Comparing questions and requests). Summing up the problem of one-to-many relationships Schiffrin (1994:86) states that "Once we start finding multiple functions, we realise that not all of the many layers of functions that realised through speech are as easily codified as those that have been more typically considered by speech act theorists, i.e. not all are first-order functions associated with communicative intentions."

Schiffrin (1994:88) points out that problems such as these above are often known "as problems of validity and reliability: do our analytic categories correspond to

similarities, and differences, among entities in the real world? [In our case Biblical Hebrew.] Would others agree with our analytic categories and be able to discover them independently of our own efforts?"

The many variables present in such an analysis as we proposed make the problems of validity and reliability emerge quite often. Trying to achieve validity and reliability is important at many stages in the process of identifying sentences as speech acts. That is why the analysis has been long and painful at some stages. However, the long and painful descriptions are the ones that allow one to conclude that a sentence may have one or more functions, that provide a description of the conditions under which a sentence may have one or more functions, and that explain why these conditions are allowing these functions (see Schiffrin 1994:88). Only under those circumstances can validity and reliability be achieved.

We have shown that speech act theory is a helpful tool to develop our understanding of interrogative sentences in BH. It helps the reader to refine the distinction of form and function and determine with more precision what function an interrogative has in different societal and social contexts. Not only that, speech act theory can provide the reader of the First Testament with a set of criteria that will help in understanding other sorts of speech acts, sequences of speech acts and consequently help in the interpretation of texts.

## APPENDIX A

In the process of identifying the speech act performed in the utterance of interrogatives in BH (specially in narrative) a few steps should be observed and are listed below.<sup>116</sup>

Firstly, the reader should look for lexical markers in the introduction of direct speeches. In quite a number of instances the three possible verb frame types (single, multiple or *lê'môr* frames) may give the clue regarding the speech act performed. In the sample text at least nine interrogative sentences were introduced by metapragmatic verbs other than the simple verb *אמר* in single verb frames. Of these number, four are a clear indications that a question is being asked (37:15; 40:7; 43:27; 44:19) and two are clear indications of a rebuke (37:10) and refusal/rebuke (39:9). The other four are distributed as follows: two indicate the psychological state of the speaker (42:28; 42:7), two are not directly related to the speech act itself (47:15; 49:9).

Secondly, the reader should observe the adjacency pairs in which the interrogatives occur. As a rule real information-seeking questions (Table 33) are presented in the first part of an adjacency pair which expects an answer in the second pair part. Of the 19 interrogatives in the sample text that were used to ask real information-seeking questions, 17 occur in the first pair part (one occurs in a set of instructions and is not paired) and only one (42:28) occurs in the second pair part due to particular circumstances that will be explained below. All other cases are followed by a verbal answer, a narrative or a pragmatic response. When observing the adjacency pairs it is also important to determine the audience of the speech,

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<sup>116</sup> In this section the reader may observe the examples in the tables on pages 46, 146 and 157.

specially in cases where there is more than one possibility (see how determining the specific audience to the speech act in 37:30 helped in the classification of the speech act).

On the other hand, interrogatives that are not used to ask questions (Table 28) may occur in the first or second pair part of an adjacency pair. Usually when they occur in the second pair part the dialogue ends or the same character continues the speech right after the utterance of the sentence (this applies to all the interrogatives in the sample text that are not used to ask real information-seeking questions).

Thirdly, the reader should look at the setting of the passage as whole (the narrative frame) observing the participants and their social ranking (superior/inferior) and if there is an indication, directly or indirectly, of the psychological state of the participants.

After these important points have been observed, one should ask if the conditions or rules for questions according to speech act theory are fulfilled (preparatory, sincerity and essential conditions – see Table 9). Observe that the three points in the remarks above are the ones that will allow the reader to verify whether or not the conditions are fulfilled. If they are met, one may conclude that a direct speech act is being performed and the form “interrogative” corresponds to the function “question”. If the conditions are not met, one must ask another set of questions (for different speech acts) until finding one for which the conditions are met. As we stated above, over 60% of the interrogatives in the sample text are used to perform speech acts other than questions. They fall into the category of indirect speech acts (see page 66). We found in the sample text that these indirect speech acts were criticism, statements, refusals, rebuttal and denial. Statements and criticism (in this order) are the most common indirect speech acts in the sample text (in 20 verses out of 23).

To sum up the steps above one may say:

- Check the syntax to see if a sentence is marked as interrogative or not;
- Check for lexical markers and speech frames;
- Check the adjacency pairs where the interrogatives occur;
- Check the narrative frame (contextual clues);
- With the information above in hand check if the speech act fulfils the conditions for questions according to speech act theory;
- If the conditions for questions are not fulfilled we have an indirect speech act; ask what is the illocutionary point (see page 62) of the speech act;
- Once one finds the illocutionary point of the speech act, it is possible to classify the speech act.

In the analysis of the sample text we were confronted with some difficult cases in which the verification of the speech act was not as easy as in others. For instance, the interrogative in 39:9 showed the importance of analysing speech acts sequences. In order to identify the function of that interrogative it was necessary to analyse deeper the speech act that generated it. Another important finding in this case, as well as 42:28, is that one utterance may be used to perform more than one speech act at a time. This last case (42:28) the speaker states something that, on account of what he deduces from a specific situation (or something that is known to him) leads him to and ask "why?" that is happening.

## APPENDIX B

In view of the findings in our research I would like to suggest a few steps towards the presentation of interrogatives in BH which could make the presentation of the subject less confusing. The description of interrogatives in BH should follow a few steps that will help a reader to understand better the pragmatic nuances of this class of sentences. Firstly, it is important to make a clear distinction, as far as possible, between form and function. To accomplish that one could present a brief introduction to speech act theory and show what it is possible to do with words and stress the possibility of direct and indirect speech acts. Thus, one could show to the reader that, although the primary function of interrogatives is to pose questions (the direct speech act), this might not be the most common speech act performed in the utterance of this kind of sentence (at least not in our sample text and probably in BH).

Following that, a simple description of the syntax of interrogative sentences in BH can take place. It should avoid pragmatic considerations or point out clearly that a certain observation has a pragmatic character and not a syntactic one. Thirdly, a pragmatic section should introduce the reader to the known facts about questions in BH. This presentation should allow room for growth as the reader himself discovers new nuances and aspects of the speech acts (direct or indirect) performed in the utterance of interrogatives in BH. See the table below as a possible presentation.



Table 35 - Possible classification of questions in BH

Questions in BH	
Classification	Function
<b>Real Information seeking</b>	To elicit unknown information
	To elicit known information - Confirmation
	More than one function / functions in both classes
<b>Rhetorical</b>	To make statements – express certitude
	To criticise
	To refuse a command
	To deny a charge
	... other functions*
	Known formulas
	*Certainly some other functions for the so-called rhetorical questions are to be found in BH. Not only functions but also some other speech act "formulas" (see footnote 82); the self-abasement formulas (see page 28), come to mind.

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