

BOOK REVIEWS

Die Inkongruenz im biblischen Hebräisch, by Jaakov Levi. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1987. Pp. xvi + 243. DM 48.

A student of Biblical Hebrew (BH) learns early on that the language is characterized by congruence of gender and number. Nouns, verbs, adjectives, and pronouns must agree depending on whether they are masculine or feminine, singular or plural. However, when this same student opens the Hebrew Bible, he quickly realizes that there are numerous instances where the grammatical rules he has just mastered break down.

Levi's volume is an attempt to systematically compile and explain the literally hundreds of such examples of incongruence in BH. The standard grammars of BH generally are cognizant of these problems, but Levi's work differs in several important ways. First, it is the most complete treatment of the subject to date. Not even the large volumes of Gesenius-Kautzsch-Cowley (GKC) and Joüon include all the evidence garnered by Levi. Secondly, Levi introduces the issue of stylistic concerns which is typically excluded from grammars of BH. Finally, in many instances scholars simply emend MT to make it conform with the rules of congruence. Levi, on the other hand, reduces such examples to a bare minimum. Accordingly, the book is a welcome addition to the scholarly literature.

Let me illustrate these three points with an example. Both GKC (p. 428) and Joüon (p. 456) note 1 Kgs 19:11 *rūaḥ gēdōlā wēḥāzāq* as an instance of incongruence, but both propose an emendation. GKC states "but read *gādōl*"; Joüon is less specific but says "mais le texte est très prob^t altéré." Other scholars, such as G. Fohrer (*Elia* [Zurich: Zwingli, 1968] 19) and J. Gray (*I & II Kings* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970] 411), suggest that the entire phrase *wēḥāzāq mēpārēq hārīm ūmēšabbēr sēlā'im* is a secondary accretion to the text (note that *mēpārēq* and *mēšabbēr* are also masculine). However, as Levi notes, in Job 1:19 and Prov 18:14 *rūaḥ* again is used as both masculine and feminine. The aforementioned scholars do not refer to these passages, and thus they have no sense that a stylistic feature may be operable in these cases. Levi is certainly correct that "dasselbe Substantive kann in ein und demselben Vers mit beiden Geschlechtern kongruieren" (p. 14). MT is not to be emended at 1 Kgs 19:11 nor need we accept the baseless conjecture of Fohrer and Gray.

Levi's attention to stylistic concerns is commendable and the results of such an analysis are impressive. For example, in a number of cases the Bible is simply citing idiomatic usage (pp. 106–7). In Exod 11:6 *kāmōhū* is used, although the antecedent is *šē'āqā*, because such is always the case (Exod 9:18; 9:24; 10:14; 2 Kgs 18:5; 23:25; Joel 2:2). Or, in Gen 49:15 *wayyar' mēnūhā kī tōb*, the last words echo the sixfold use

of this expression in Genesis 1. In these and other cases, the desire to cite expressions well-known to the reader overrides the grammatical rules of agreement.

Ellipsis is advanced to explain many passages where incongruence occurs (pp. 109–24). This is especially common with the word *qôl* “voice.” For example, in 1 Kgs 22:36 *wayya‘âbôr hârinnâ bammahâneh*, it is assumed that *qôl rinnâ* is to be understood, especially since the latter phrase occurs in Isa 48:20; Pss 42:5; 47:2; 118:15. Or, in Josh 1:7 *mimmennâ* resumes *hattôrâ*, but the sense is the common biblical expression *sêper hattôrâ*.

Still another stylistic usage is attraction, where psychological considerations override strict grammatical agreement (pp. 125–40). A good example of this is 1 Kgs 17:16 *wêšappaḥat haššemen lô’ ḥâšêr*, where the author wishes to emphasize that it is the oil, not the cruse, which did not fail (though compare v. 14).

Although generally I am in agreement with Levi’s approach, I do not believe that each example he puts forward is correctly explained. Alternative explanations need to be considered, or at least mentioned in the footnotes. In what follows, I list a number of such instances, with special attention paid to cognate Semitic usages.

In his section on the numerals (pp. 16–18), Levi should incorporate the Ugaritic material. In this language either form of the numbers between two and ten (with or without *-t*) may be used with either gender (masculine or feminine). See C. H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1967) 42–43; and S. Loewenstamm, “The Numerals in Ugaritic,” *Proceedings of the International Conference on Semitic Studies* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1969) 174.

The use of *hâ’* for the plural and for the feminine (Exod 6:26, etc.) (p. 105) is paralleled in Egyptian, where the originally 3msg personal pronoun *pw* becomes “invariable in number and gender” (A. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar* [Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1957] 103).

The many examples of the *bôr haggâdôl* (1 Sam 19:22) construction, where the noun is indefinite and the adjective is definite, are not examples of ellipsis (pp. 117–20). Instead, they are true adjectival clauses, albeit with one anarthrous element. This usage is very common in colloquial Arabic. See, e.g., M. Feghali, *Syntaxe des parler arabes actuels du Liban* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1928) 134–35; and L. Bauer, *Das palästinische Arabisch* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1910) 105–6. Moreover, as Levi notes, this syntagma occurs most commonly with places (*ša‘ar, ḥâšêr*, etc.). This is also true of at least Baghdadi Arabic; see H. Blanc, *Communal Dialects in Baghdad* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964) 126–27. Accordingly, the BH examples are to be understood as colloquialisms which have penetrated the literary idiom; see further G. A. Rendsburg, *Diglossia in Ancient Hebrew* (Ann Arbor, MI: American Oriental Society, forthcoming).

Although not all scholars accept the existence of 3msg *t*- for imperfect verbs, one expects mention of it during the discussion of 2 Sam 13:39; Ps 42:2; Job 20:9 (pp. 122–24).

There is no incongruence in 1 Sam 10:18 (p. 155). The word *mamlākôt* here means “kings” (and not “kingdoms”) as in Phoenician. See P. K. McCarter, *I Samuel* (AB 8; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1980) 192).

There is also no incongruence in Ps 9:7 (pp. 163, 183). In this verse *‘ârîm* does not mean “cities”; rather it is a dialectal form of “adversaries” (standard BH *šârîm*). See R. Gordis, “Psalm 9–10—A Textual and Exegetical Study,” *JQR* 48 (1958) 111.

Levi mistakenly fuses *hokmôt*, “wisdom,” in Prov 1:20; 9:1, and *hakmôt*, “wise woman,” in Prov 14:1 into one vocable (pp. 191–92). Moreover, there is no incongruence in these three instances. These nouns are not fpl; rather fsg “with original *-ot* becoming *-ot* in accordance with the Phoenician rule” in a book with many evidences of north Israelite origin (thus H. L. Ginsberg, *The Israelian Heritage of Judaism* [New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1982] 36).

Finally, Levi is correct in considering ‘*erkĕkâ* in Lev 5:15 *et passim* with the pronominal suffix as “eine erstarrte Form” (p. 101). But it would have been appropriate to cite E. A. Speiser (“Leviticus and the Critics,” *Oriental and Biblical Studies* [ed. J. J. Finkelstein and M. Greenberg; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1967] 124–25) who also cited Akkadian parallels with fossilized pronominal suffixes.

Two recent works should be added to Levi’s bibliography. The interested scholar will also wish to consult R. Ratner, *Gender Problems in Biblical Hebrew* (Ph.D. dissertation; Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, 1983). Hundreds of Levi’s examples are treated therein. Recently, S. Gevartz (“Asher in the Blessing of Jacob [Genesis xlix 20],” *VT* 37 [1987] 162) has explained 1 Sam 10:3–4 by means of the “stylistic device in Hebrew, whereby gender discrepancies in successive or neighboring verses were deliberately contrived.”

It is most unfortunate that technically this book has two major failings. The first is the consistent misspelling of the names of the world’s leading biblicists: Jouön (p. 11 *et passim*), Kadari (p. 12), J. R. Driver (pp. 16, 18), Orlinski (p. 45), Nöldecke (p. 49), Rölling (pp. 67, 73), Zimmerly (p. 97), Gunckel (p. 101), Leuterbach (p. 114), R. E. Clifford (p. 144). Other words are also misspelled: Grammair (p. 45), Hoy (for *Hoy*) (p. 144), Prophecy (p. 144), Cunéformes (p. 240), l’hebrew (p. 240). Similarly, Avishur’s article cited on p. 239 appeared in the journal *Semitics* (not *Semantics*) on pp. 17–81 (not pp. 1–10). Furthermore, biblical passages are sometimes cited incorrectly, e.g., the three verses listed on p. 106 as Exod 9:14, 9:14, 9:24 are actually, respectively, Exod 10:14, 9:18, 9:24, and in the second of these Levi omits the word *mē’ōd*.

The other failing is the total absence of any indexes. I approximate that this book cites well over a thousand biblical passages. Its usefulness is greatly reduced by the lack of an index of citations. Even while reading it, I found myself trying to recall where a particular verse had been referred to earlier, with no option other than laboriously to turn pages until the desired passage was located. It is almost a commonplace for a reviewer to decry the lack of proper indexes in a particular book, but in this case the absence of an index of citations can only be called inexcusable. Levi’s monograph is not a book to be read and then shelved to collect dust. It is essentially a reference work to be used and reused. Future grammarians, text critics, and commentators will all want to refer to it, but I fear they will be frustrated to the point of exhaustion. I plead to Levi to produce an index and to find an appropriate organ by which to make it available to scholars. Either he should convince a journal to publish it or he should privately distribute it to interested scholars. It is a shame that the reader of this stimulating and useful work should be severely handicapped by the lack of an index.

Gary A. Rendsburg
Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853