

**EMPHASIS OR ASSERTION? REMARKS ON  
THE PARONOMASTIC INFINITIVE IN HEBREW<sup>1)</sup>**

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*Abstract*

*Yoo-Ki Kim's recent dissertation challenges the widely-held view that the so-called paronomastic infinitive in Biblical Hebrew acts as a marker of emphasis. Rather, the author suggests (as some others have done before him) that this construction is related to the notion of assertion, i.e., the speaker's belief or conviction that the proposition is true. The present review article evaluates Kim's synchronic analysis; it also attempts to supplement his somewhat cursory discussion of inner-biblical developments and the situation in other Semitic languages.*

There seems to be widespread agreement in Hebrew scholarship that the infinitive absolute together with a finite verb of the same root, and usually the same stem formation, like the ubiquitous מוֹת תָּמוּת (Gen 2:17 and *passim*), reinforces the idea expressed by the verb, be it an assertion or a denial. While it is not quite clear whether this so-called “paronomastic” use of the infinitive can ever mark a particular situation type, e.g., ingressivity, intensity of the action, or even durativity, or whether it is the infinitive as such which serves an emphatic function and not the doubling of the verbal root, many grammarians continue to subscribe to the view that this linguistic device has something to do with intensification. Hence translators usually try to render its force by means of adverbs such as “indeed” or “surely”, even though the rationale behind such choices is rarely made explicit. The naive claim that repetition of a word by itself causes plurality or amplification is of course much too vague to be of any use, if it has a basis in fact at all. In his 2006 Johns Hopkins dissertation, directed by P. Kyle McCarter, Yoo-Ki Kim takes a different approach and challenges the mainstream opinion as well as its often unquestioned foundations by means of sound analytical tools. His book merits and rewards a close study.

The introduction (1–22) first clarifies some terminological matters. The author notes that the traditional terms “infinitive absolute” and “infinitive construct” incorrectly suggest a paradigmatic relationship between both patterns in terms of state alone, although he employs them nonetheless. However, instead of a more common designation for the particular usage he is interested in, such as “paronomastic infinitive”, “cognate infinitive”, or *figura etymologica*, he adopts Goldenberg's ill-suited label “tautological infinitive” without explaining the reason for his preference.<sup>2)</sup> This nomenclature should be avoided: in rhetoric, “tautology” merely refers to a general repetition of meaning,<sup>3)</sup> whereas “paronomasy” explicitly denotes the similarity of

<sup>1)</sup> Review article of: Yoo-Ki Kim – *The Function of the Tautological Infinitive in Classical Biblical Hebrew*. (Harvard Semitic Studies 60). Eisenbrauns, Winona Lake, 2009. (23,5 cm, XV, 151). ISBN 978-1-57506-934-0. \$34.95.

<sup>2)</sup> G. Goldenberg, “Tautological Infinitive”, *Israel Oriental Studies* 1 (1971) 36–85. Goldenberg does not defend this term either, using it interchangeably with “infinitival paronomasia” for the Hebrew material.

<sup>3)</sup> G. Staab, “Tautologie”, in: G. Ueding (ed.), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik* 9, Tübingen 2009, 452–456.

sound,<sup>4)</sup> which is of course a characteristic feature of the grammatical construction in question.

He then proceeds to distinguish this particular usage from the verbal, nominal, and adnominal functions of the same form, rightly pointing out that the paronomastic one is especially characteristic of Classical Biblical Hebrew. *Pace* his remark on p. 5, the morphological distinction between two infinitive patterns is not necessarily restricted to Ancient Hebrew, but, in all likelihood, was also present in Phoenician: since the normal reflex of the original pattern *qatāl-* underlying the “infinitive absolute” appears as *qatōl* in Phoenician and Punic (with *ō > ū* in Punic, cf. \**lašān* > *λασσον* “tongue”), forms like *liful* and *luful* (*Poenulus* 945; 935) supposedly correspond to a nominal pattern *q(u)tul*, resembling the situation in Hebrew.<sup>5)</sup> Evidence from other epigraphic languages is ambiguous due to the limitations of the West Semitic writing system. As a consequence, the coexistence of an “absolute” and a “construct” infinitive might have been quite common in Canaanite. It is a minority view to propose that the latter, too, derives from \**qatāl-* by means of regular sound changes, as the author does on p. 130 and 131.<sup>6)</sup>

A survey of ancient and modern translations shows that the paronomastic infinitive has been understood in different ways ever since. It is rendered unsystematically by different types of *figura etymologica* (such as a cognate participle or noun in the dative) in Septuagint and Vulgate and frequently omitted altogether in the latter; the Pšittā uses the analogous Syriac construction; and the Targums Onqelos and Jonathan even employ what seems to be an artificial by-form *miktāb* for the basic stem infinitive instead of the usual *miktāb* pattern, thereby achieving the highest degree of formal equivalence. Mention should be made of R. Kutý,<sup>7)</sup> who notes, with respect to Targum Jonathan, that an infinitive absolute in Hebrew which does not precede or directly follow a finite verb is rendered with a participle. Since the Aramaic counterpart never occurs in passages absent from the *Vorlage*, it seems to be part of the Targumist’s translationese. All in all, however, it is hard to say how the ancient versions actually understood this expression.

Modern translations, on the other hand, often supply various adverbs (“surely”), but also nouns as an inner object (reproducing the *figura etymologica*: “to die a death” etc.) and modal verbs (“must”, “shall”), in order to emphasize the verb in some way or other. By and large, they operate on an *ad hoc* principle, which in turn points to the lack of a unified and coherent functional description. A concise review of secondary literature concludes the introduction by examining

<sup>4)</sup> R.G. Czaplá, “Paronomasie”, in: G. Ueding (ed.), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik* 6, Tübingen 2003, 649–652; *figura etymologica* or *schema etymologicum* would also be suitable names, but one cannot derive adjectives from them: H. Reckendorf, *Über Paronomasie in den semitischen Sprachen*, Gießen 1909, 1. See also H. Lausberg, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik*, Stuttgart <sup>3</sup>1990, §648, no. 6.

<sup>5)</sup> See J. Friedrich and W. Röllig, *Phönizisch-punische Grammatik*, Rome <sup>3</sup>1999, §138 (with §197a on *qatāl-*); H. Gzella, “Phönizisch”, in: *id.* (ed.), *Sprachen aus der Welt des Alten Testaments*, Darmstadt 2009, 48–64, here pp. 59–60.

<sup>6)</sup> In order to support his view, however, he could have referred to B. Kienast, *Historische Semitische Sprachwissenschaft*, Wiesbaden 2001, 380–381.

<sup>7)</sup> R.J. Kutý, “Remarks on the Syntax of the Participle in Targum Jonathan on Samuel”, in: H. Gzella and M.L. Folmer (eds.), *Aramaic in its Historical and Linguistic Setting*, Wiesbaden 2008, 207–220, especially 215–218.

the methodological underpinnings of present attempts to cope with the meaning of the paronomastic infinitive. Concepts like “intensification”, “emphasis”, “strengthening” etc. regularly crop up in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century grammars as well as in topical studies, but these notions are taken for granted rather than demonstrated on empirical grounds. Other works focus on the background of the morphological categories involved and devote little attention to their use in Hebrew. Clearly, then, it is high time for a reinvestigation of the issue on a broader textual basis.

Kim’s own synchronic analysis of the material occupies the central chapter (23–98). It constitutes the longest and most useful part of the book. The author briefly reviews some modern theoretical frameworks before opting for a basically functional perspective; he does not, however, commit himself to any particular approach. For practical reasons, the textual corpus corresponds to Classical (i.e., pre-exilic) Hebrew prose according to a conservative classification and covers the non-poetic material from Genesis through 2 Kings according to the Masoretic vocalization. Unlike other studies with a similar corpus-based outlook, the author excludes the Priestly source, because he assigns it to a somewhat later date. One could of course try to account for other factors that can cause variation in the data, such as dialectal diversification or the presence of later redactional layers, but since it would be very difficult to obtain agreement on these hypotheses in each individual case, a traditional stance seems quite adequate. Nonetheless, a finer distinction between different linguistic registers might have been helpful when discussing individual examples. Earlier studies have pointed out that the paronomastic infinitive chiefly appears in direct speech and legalese, whereas it is very rare in narrative.<sup>8)</sup> This general taxonomy could perhaps still be improved.

From a syntactic point of view, absolute infinitives in a paronomastic construction differ from other nominal forms of the same root used as direct object of a transitive verb, here termed “argument cognate object”, because they do not take the article, only occur in the singular absolute state, always lack the direct object marker, more often than not precede the finite verb to which they are related, and show a much wider distribution among various verbal roots. Instead, they share properties with other nouns, cognate or not, which can modify an intransitive or a single transitive verb and its direct object adverbially (cf. 1 Sam 20:17).<sup>9)</sup> In spite of this, such “adverbial cognate objects” are not governed by the same restrictions as paronomastic infinitives, hence the latter seem to constitute a category apart. They bear greater resemblance to adverbs and particles, but, judging from the overall agreement in the stem formation in more than 90% of the examples considered, form a more intimate relationship with the finite verb. This rules out interpreting them, with Goldenberg, as objects in left-dislocation. In short, as Kim plausibly maintains, the paronomastic infinitive “can be classi-

<sup>8)</sup> See, e.g., M. Eskhult, “Hebrew Infinitival Paronomasia”, *Orientalia Suecana* 49 (2000) 27–32, missing from the bibliography. To be fair, however, the author is aware of such a distribution, as his remark on p. 76 indicates, and suggests that examples in narrative betray a strong personal involvement of the narrator (cf. Kim’s discussion of Num 11:32 and Josh 17:13 on p. 83).

<sup>9)</sup> The fact that these nouns take the accusative case in Classical Arabic has led many scholars to interpret also the paronomastic absolute infinitives as “inner objects”, including C. Brockelmann, *Grundriß der vergleichenden Grammatik der semitischen Sprachen* II, Berlin 1913, §203.

fied as a special type of adverb that combines with the cognate finite verb in a unique way” (43). More precisely, he later argues, it “functions as an optional modifier of the verb” (56), i.e., “a grammatical or functional constituent that combines with the cognate verb to build up a complex predicate” (57). While this is quite feasible as a general rule, some poetic passages like Isa 22:17.18 do use a paronomastic infinitive absolute and a cognate object based on a different noun pattern in parallelism, thus levelling the difference between both constructions.<sup>10)</sup>

It is much less convincing to derive the use of the infinitive absolute instead of a finite verb, usually for past-tense events in narrative, from the paronomastic construction by assuming that the finite verb has been deleted (43 with n. 70). This explanation would be hard to square with the fact that most of the “narrative” infinitives in Hebrew have to be preceded by finite verbs highlighting a main event and thus seem to be contextually subordinate, whereas paronomastic infinitives are not; moreover, the conjecture of a simple loss of the finite verb cannot explain the regular presence of independent personal pronouns in analogous constructions in Ugaritic and Phoenician; neither does this idea account for the general scarcity of paronomastic infinitives in narrative (see above), which is where infinitives taking the place of a finite verb normally occur; lastly, if “narrative” infinitives were only shortened forms of the paronomastic ones, it would be difficult to give a reason why the latter gradually disappeared in Late and Post-Biblical Hebrew, whereas the use of the former seems to increase remarkably in the post-exilic and, especially, the Second Temple period (see the remark on diachrony below). As a consequence, the present reviewer still thinks that a reduction of markedness is the best historical explanation of the “narrative” infinitive absolute in Semitic currently available.<sup>11)</sup>

Word order has also played a role in attempts to elucidate the meaning of the paronomastic infinitive. While the unmarked form precedes the finite verb in the vast majority of cases, with the negative particle **לֹא** coming between both constituent parts (though 1 Kgs 3:26 has **אֵל**, and the negation precedes the infinitive in Gen 3:4), some widespread grammars, such as Ewald and especially Gesenius-Kautzsch, assume that the reverse order signals durativity or continuance. The author, on the contrary, sides with those who deny such a semantic difference and points out that the infinitive tends to follow either a *wayyiqtol* form, an imperative, or an infinitive construct, at times with an intervening particle or a suffixed preposition, although he stresses that syntactic constraints may not be the only factors involved. He does not reflect on the possible origin of the “durative” interpretation of the infinitive following the finite verb. This, in fact, seems to be based on an analogy with a number of cases where **הִלִּיךְ**, mostly in post-verbal position and generally occurring together with another infinitive, no doubt expresses continuance (so Gesenius-Kautzsch §113s: “Insbesondere gehören hierher die Fälle, wo dem Inf. absol. ein zweiter Infin. absol. koordiniert ist”). However, the reason seems to be the lexical meaning of the root **הלך**, which enabled its infinitive absolute

<sup>10)</sup> Acutely remarked by, E. König, *Historisch-kritisches Lehrgebäude der hebräischen Sprache: Syntax*, Leipzig 1897, §329o, a book which Kim would have consulted with profit.

<sup>11)</sup> So A. Gai, “The Reduction of Tense (and Other Categories) of the Consequent Verb in North-West Semitic”, *Orientalia* N.S. 51 (1982) 254–256.

to turn into an adverb “continually”,<sup>12)</sup> and not the inverted order of constituents. Coordinated infinitives absolute, which predominantly appear in narrative, receive no further treatment, though. Either position in the sentence is said to distinguish the paronomastic infinitive from adverbs and prepositional phrases, thus adding support to its interpretation as part of a complex predicate (61–63).

The subsequent pragmatic analysis addresses the communicative effect of the paronomastic infinitive. As has been pointed out before, the conventional, “emphatic”, interpretation is difficult to prove and does not adequately account for those cases where the infinitive occurs together with an intensifying adverb like **מְאֹד** “very much” (cf. 63). Would **דָּר מְאֹד** then add extra weight? Instead of a rubbery concept like “emphasis”, the author works with the categories of focus (i.e., the most salient information in a communicative setting) and factuality (i.e., concerning the truth-value of the proposition). The infinitive draws attention to the verb and thus reinforces the factuality of the proposition. Following Givón, he concludes that an optional element in a clause, like the paronomastic infinitive, “must be itself the focus of the asserted information” (75). In opposition to preceding approaches based on information structure, however, Kim objects that this construction does not necessarily mark contrast, but opts for the broader notion of “assertion” instead. This can also entail that the speaker or writer wants to correct the hearer’s or reader’s purported contrary belief, as in Deut 6:16–17, though not necessarily so, as in 2 Sam 5:19. Several references on pp. 80–81<sup>13)</sup> indicate that such an interpretation is not entirely new, even if it has not been embedded in a linguistic framework of similar coherence before. Bravmann’s theory, according to which the infinitive acts as a “psychological predicate” introducing new information by means of a generic, uninflected, form, detached from a specific event, receives no mention. One wonders what Kim would think of this approach, since Bravmann, too, doubts that the paronomastic infinitive can be analyzed as an inner object.<sup>14)</sup>

Assertion, however, presupposes the speaker’s belief or conviction that the proposition is true. For the same reason, it can also be described as a subtype of epistemic modality.<sup>15)</sup> No wonder, then, that the paronomastic infinitive goes together with the “imperfect” (or “prefix conjugation”), whose semantic range also includes various epistemic and deontic modal nuances, in about three quarters of the examples under analysis. Once again, this is a correlation for which the traditional theory based on an understanding of the paronomastic infinitive as a marker of emphasis cannot adequately account. Its frequent use in rhetorical questions as

<sup>12)</sup> See H. Gzella, “Zum periphrastischen Infinitiv in Gen. VIII 5”, *Vetus Testamentum* 58 (2008) 1–11, esp. p. 5 with n. 15 (with further bibliographical references).

<sup>13)</sup> Add König, *Syntax*, §329r–t, who associates infinitival paronomasia with a “Behauptungssätze [...], wo die ganze Aussage bekräftigt werden soll”, “betonender Frage und Mahnung”, “Versicherungen”, “Zugeständnissen”, “Antithesen” and “Bedingungen”. Most of these usages correspond to the idea of assertion *avant la lettre*.

<sup>14)</sup> M.M. Bravmann, “The Infinitive in the Function of ‘Psychological Predicate’ in Syriac”, *Le Muséon* 89 (1971) 219–223. This scholar focuses on Syriac, but also interprets the Hebrew text of Deut 22:6–7 in a similar way (“Letting [her] go free is what you should do with the mother-bird”).

<sup>15)</sup> So, too, A. Gianto in his classic article “Mood and Modality in Classical Hebrew”, *Israel Oriental Studies* 18 (1998) 183–198, esp. 188–189, which should have been cited instead of some linguistically much less well-informed contributions on p. 79, nn. 210 and 211.

opposed to its consistent absence in *wh*-questions, too, reflects the speaker's emotional commitment.<sup>16)</sup> The reader notes with surprise that the author then examines the Septuagint renderings of the reverse order of constituents (finite verb – infinitive) and reproduces the list of all thirteen examples of this order, which has already been cited, though this time together with a brief paraphrase (85–89). Kim holds that constructions in the reserve order “are generally more charged with emotion than the common order” (89), as they seem to constitute reactions to unexpected or undesirable events. One might add that this does not seem to apply to coordinated infinitives (see above).

Linguistic means with a comparable function in Hebrew, by contrast, are not discussed, although they have a greater bearing on the functional analysis proposed here and could support some of the author's main observations. Contrasting the two paronomastic infinitives in 1 Kgs 8:13 and 2 Kgs 14:10 with the alternative renderings in the corresponding parallel passages 2 Chr 6:2 and 25:19 may illustrate this point. In 2 Chr 6:2, the clause-initial infinitive used in 1 Kgs 8:13 is replaced by a fronted personal pronoun in the same position, which, as Muraoka perceptively remarks, has a “self-asserting tone”<sup>17)</sup> and thus reinforces the factuality of the proposition rather than adding extra emphasis or highlighting a contrast. The expression in 2 Chr 25:19, on the other hand, features the deictic marker הנה instead of the infinitive in 2 Kgs 14:10, but הנה, too, tends to crop up in assertive utterances,<sup>18)</sup> while its connection with intensification or contrast seems much less clear. This indicates that linguistic devices otherwise associated with focus and assertion took the place of the paronomastic infinitive once it became obsolete in post-exilic Hebrew. As a consequence, such evidence at least indirectly corroborates the idea that also infinitival paronomasia stresses the factuality of a proposition.

The concluding part of the synchronic analysis discusses a few examples with the roots ידע, מות, שוב, and שמע at greater length. Judging from these case studies, the syntactic behaviour of the paronomastic infinitive can also depend on the specific verb. Infinitive constructions with ידע “to know” for deontic modality generally take object clauses headed by כי and thereby appear to be more restricted in the selection of a complement than imperatives, but the use of the infinitive itself does not necessarily cause a difference in meaning here (compare Gen 20:7 with 1 Kgs 2:37). Such semantic distinctions can be identified more clearly in other cases. So instances with מות “to die” tend to refer to death as punishment, this often being the most salient bit of information in the respective communicative context. Some occurrences with שוב “to return” also indicate that the paronomastic infinitive is used for introducing new information, yet it is omitted when the same utterance recurs (as in Gen 18:10 vis-à-vis 18:14; for a similar case with אכל, see Gen 2:16 and 2:17). No doubt the notion of focus and assertion works very well for these and similar passages. A number of examples with the root שמע “to hear”, finally, suggest that paronomastic infinitives in conditional clauses prefer the particle

אם as opposed to כי (in the sense of “if”); in addition to that, they seem to be incompatible with negative protases.

One would like to see a similar analysis for other roots as well, further illustrating the author's *prolegomena* on the syntactic and pragmatic roles of the paronomastic infinitive. Instances where the assertive notion might also affect the meaning of the verb merit some comment, such as ידעתי כי “I know that he has a way with words” (Ex 4:14), in contradistinction to plain ידבר “he speaks, he can speak”.<sup>19)</sup> Moreover, it would be worthwhile to examine whether there is also a functional difference between paronomastic infinitives and other adverbial cognate nouns on top of their distinct syntactic behaviour.<sup>20)</sup> Noun patterns other than the infinitive absolute might feature in particular idiomatic expressions, as in והוא שכב את משכב הצהרים “while he was taking his noon-day rest” (2 Sam 4:5) vis-à-vis the paronomastic construction in the protasis of a conditional clause in Lev 15:24; likewise, the expression “to dream a dream” (e.g., Gen 37:5), which has no infinitival counterpart, often refers to prophetic dreams, as opposed to the more general use of the root הלם without such a complement. The use of the paronomastic infinitive together with אך, which has been described as reinforcing a relative time boundary (“just after”, “just then”),<sup>21)</sup> is not examined either, although this interpretation makes good sense in the two passages usually associated with it (Gen 27:30 and Judg 7:19). Last but not least, some brief remarks on paronomasy as a general stylistic phenomenon could be added.<sup>22)</sup>

Historical issues, some of which have been alluded to in the preceding sections, are subsequently placed against a more comprehensive diachronic background in the last chapter (99–131). Owing to the author's main interest in synchronic description, there are more loose ends here. The first part addresses the development of the paronomastic infinitive within later stages of first-millennium Hebrew. While the Priestly source by and large exhibits the same use pattern as Classical Hebrew, excepting twenty instances of the Qal infinitive of מות followed by a Hophal finite verb of the same root (no doubt a formulaic expression), Jeremiah occupies a special place, both due to the disproportionately high frequency of this construction and some syntactic peculiarities. To those features already mentioned by Kim, one could add Jeremiah's noteworthy preference for השכם (lit. “to do early”, here “to do eagerly”) together with another infinitive absolute and a finite verb cognate with the second infinitive: no less than 11 out of 12 occurrences of this particular idiom appear in Jeremiah (with שלח: 7:25; 25:4; 26:5; 29:19; 35:15; 44:4; with דבר: 7:13; 25:3 [read instead השכם of האשכים];<sup>23)</sup> 35:14; with למד: 32:33 [read ואלמד instead of ולמד];<sup>24)</sup> and with עוד:

<sup>19)</sup> Ex 4:14 is also seen as an example of the “assertive” use of the “imperfect” by Gianto, “Mood”, 194.

<sup>20)</sup> Some examples can be found in C. Brockelmann, *Hebräische Syntax*, Neukirchen 1956, §93d. König, *Syntax*, §329d, plausibly argues that in such cases the focus is often on the noun rather than on the verb.

<sup>21)</sup> B.K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, Winona Lake 1990, 588; cf. W. Gesenius, *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament*, ed. by R. Meyer and H. Donner, 18<sup>th</sup> ed., fasc. 1, Berlin 1987, s.v. אך, 4: “temp. vor Inf. abs. soeben, kaum”.

<sup>22)</sup> Reckendorf's *Paronomasie*, of which the author does not seem to be aware, contains abundant material.

<sup>23)</sup> See, e.g., W. Holladay, *Jeremiah I*, Philadelphia 1986, 662.

<sup>24)</sup> Suggested by, among others, P. Volz, *Der Prophet Jeremia*, Leipzig 1928, 305.

<sup>16)</sup> This has been anticipated by G. Bergsträsser, *Hebräische Grammatik II*, Leipzig 1929, §12d.

<sup>17)</sup> T. Muraoka, *Emphatic Words and Structures in Biblical Hebrew*, Jerusalem 1985, 52–53 with n. 24.

<sup>18)</sup> Compare, for instance, the performatives in 1 Kgs 3:12, also subsumed under “assertive” modality by Gianto, “Mood”, 194.

11:7). Incidentally, the only remaining occurrence belongs to Late Biblical Hebrew (2 Chr 36:15). Ezekiel, by contrast, contains proportionately much fewer instances, and this decline continues into Late Biblical and Post-Biblical Hebrew. Hence the Chronicler has only five paronomastic infinitives, but omits four instances which feature in parallel passages in Samuel and Kings.<sup>25)</sup> With a few exceptions perhaps resulting from an imitation of Classical Hebrew style, examples are lacking in other “late” books and seem to be practically confined to biblical quotations and allusions (for want of a more precise term) in Qumran Hebrew. Ben Sira, too, contains but very few instances; the author might have wished to refer to W.Th. van Peursen’s comprehensive study.<sup>26)</sup> Kim does not attempt to explain this development; one could assume that it is a result of the increasing influence of Achaemenid Official Aramaic on Hebrew during post-exilic times, as the infinitive absolute was unusual in the chancellery language of the Persian Empire, although its existence can be demonstrated in certain varieties of Old Aramaic.<sup>27)</sup> Regrettably, the author also refrains from connecting the decrease of the paronomastic infinitive with the concurrent increase of the “narrative” infinitive in Late Biblical and Second Temple Hebrew.<sup>28)</sup> This, among other reasons, strongly indicates that the two are not directly related (see the remark above for some further thoughts).

In the remaining part of the final chapter, Kim reviews infinitival paronomasia in some other ancient Semitic languages. While the examples are by no means numerous and seem to reflect different syntactic usages, his analysis of their pragmatic function works well for them. Evidence from Akkadian, where the finite verb almost invariably follows the infinitive (often reinforced by *-ma*) and consistently occurs in the same stem, points to the antiquity of this order of constituents in Semitic. The same examples also indicate that the ending *-u(m)* was the most frequent one. It could be interpreted as a nominative case in fronted extraposition or, with many grammarians, as a locative-adverbial ending. Verbal roots which have a glottal stop as their third radical (III’) demonstrate that the infinitive mostly takes the ending *-u* in Ugaritic, too, because they exhibit case marking due to a peculiarity of this particular writing system. However, the existence of a locative-adverbial as in Akkadian is not universally accepted for this language.<sup>29)</sup> Since a direct object would normally be expected to take the accusative case (ending in

*-a*), Akkadian and Ugaritic material is often adduced in order to disprove, from a morphosyntactic point of view, the old hypothesis that the paronomastic infinitive acts as an inner object. In addition to that, a few examples with the inverted order finite verb – infinitive in Ugaritic might suggest that the alleged nominative, as a kind of default case marking, is not necessarily triggered by the constituent occurring fronted extraposition. A straightforward adverbial modifier, on the other hand, would usually take the accusative case ending as well. The purported example of a genitive, i.e., *ḥti nḥtu* in KTU 2:10:7–8, customarily translated “they have been crushed”, merits further investigation,<sup>30)</sup> unless one wishes to open Pandora’s Box and posit an incipient breakdown of case marking in the linguistic system underlying Ugaritic epistolary prose! Despite our very incomplete knowledge of the subtleties of the morphological case system in Bronze Age West Semitic, one might tentatively suggest, if one hesitates to posit a locative-adverbial for Ugaritic, that the *-u* ending with the infinitive could have originated from an unmarked nominative case of an element in fronted extraposition, but was on its way to being generalized in Ugaritic. Unfortunately, the use of cases in the Amorite personal names does not seem to provide any clues for solving this puzzle. It should be borne in mind that morphologically unambiguous examples in the Ugaritic texts, that is, those infinitives belonging to verbal roots III’, constitute only a fraction of the total evidence and might, in theory, not be representative.

As for the Old Aramaic corpus, some paronomastic infinitives, all with the finite verb following, have been identified with reasonable certainty in the mid-eighth century Sfire stela from Western Syria. While *hwm* at the beginning of l. 6 of the second Nerab-stele from Northern Syria (commonly dated to ca. 700 B.C.) and the not entirely unquestionable reading *q[r]q<sup>2</sup>* in l. 9 of the Mesopotamian Assur letter (ca. 650 B.C.) remain somewhat dubious, they are parsed as absolute infinitives by V. Hug in the standard grammar of this material.<sup>31)</sup> The author also seems to underestimate the complicated relationship between Old Aramaic and Achaemenid Official Aramaic.<sup>32)</sup> He prefers to interpret such forms as inherited from an earlier stage of Semitic rather than borrowed from Canaanite, but the uneven distribution of this feature in the Old Aramaic material might suggest that the solution is less simple than that. Another instance can be found in the Transjordanian Balaam inscription, even though the significance of this example for reconstruction of the situation in Aramaic depends on one’s classification of this much-debated text.<sup>33)</sup> Interestingly, the expression *wbkh ybkh* in ll. 3–4 of the first combination, as Kim rightly points out, recurs in Biblical Hebrew, again in a circumstantial clause (1 Sam 1:10; cf Lam 1:2). One could easily defend the view that the paronomastic infinitive belongs to the Canaanite layer of the

<sup>25)</sup> This has already been pointed out by A. Kropat, *Die Syntax des Autors der Chronik verglichen mit seinen Quellen*, Gießen 1909, 23; see also M. Eskhult, “Verbal Syntax in Late Biblical Hebrew”, in: T. Muraoka and J.F. Elwolde (eds.), *Diggers at the Well: Proceedings of a Third International Symposium on the Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls & Ben Sira*, Leiden 2000, 84–93, here p. 90, and *id.*, “Markers of Text Type in Biblical Hebrew From a Diachronic Perspective”, in: M.F.J. Baasten and W.Th. van Peursen (eds.), *Hamlet on a Hill. Semitic and Greek Studies Presented to Professor T. Muraoka on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, Louvain 2003, 153–164, here pp. 161–164. Regrettably, all these studies are missing from the bibliography.

<sup>26)</sup> W.Th. van Peursen, *The Verbal System in the Hebrew Text of Ben Sira*, Leiden 2004, 279–280.

<sup>27)</sup> The most recent description is M.L. Folmer, “Alt- und Reichsaramäisch”, in: H. Gzella (ed.), *Sprachen aus der Welt des Alten Testaments*, Darmstadt 2009, 104–131, here p. 121.

<sup>28)</sup> See now S.E. Fassberg, “The Infinitive Absolute as Finite Verb and Standard Literary Hebrew of the Second Temple Period”, in: J. Joosten and J.–S. Rey (eds.), *Conservatism and Innovation in the Hebrew Language of the Hellenistic Period: Proceedings of a Fourth International Symposium on the Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls & Ben Sira*, Leiden 2008, 47–60.

<sup>29)</sup> Pace Kienast, *Sprachwissenschaft*, 472, 477.

<sup>30)</sup> For a different interpretation, see D.G. Pardee, “As Strong as Death” in: J.H. Marks and R.M. Good (eds.), *Love and Death in the Ancient Near East: Essays in Honor of Marvin H. Pope*, Guilford 1987, 65–69, here p. 67.

<sup>31)</sup> V. Hug, *Altaramäische Grammatik der Texte des 7. und 6. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.*, Heidelberg 1993, 77, another important study which goes unmentioned.

<sup>32)</sup> See now H. Gzella, “The Heritage of Imperial Aramaic in Eastern Aramaic”, *Aramaic Studies* 6 (2009) 85–109.

<sup>33)</sup> For a summary of various proposals, including some more recent ones than those mentioned by Kim on p. 121, see this reviewer’s forthcoming entry “Deir ‘Allā”, in: G. Khan (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics*, Leiden.

Balaam text, which mainly comprises lexical items, idiomatic expressions, and verbal usage, whereas phonology and morphology have a distinctly Aramaic garb.<sup>34</sup>) The enigmatic phrase *ḥšb ḥšb wḥšb ḥ[šb* in the same document (ll. 12–13) might contain another example, but the lack of context does not allow one to say more about this perhaps deliberately enigmatic string of words.<sup>35</sup>) Hence the occurrence of at least one paronomastic infinitive in the Balaam inscription furnishes no independent evidence for the existence of such a construction in Old Aramaic.

With a survey of the situation in Canaanite, the focus shifts to the more immediate linguistic environment of Biblical Hebrew. The earliest clear manifestations of this sub-branch of Semitic appear in the non-Akkadian material to be found in the so-called Amarna letters, although the problem of their linguistic status is not addressed here.<sup>36</sup>) Kim cites four possible examples, in which the infinitive supposedly occurs in the accusative case. All of them, however, are at least partially reconstructed or otherwise ambiguous in the cuneiform spelling. But even if the accusative ending *-a* can be confidently identified, it does not necessarily point to an adverbial function, as the author, following Moran's footsteps, assumes. While such an interpretation would furnish a parallel to the use of the locative-adverbial in Akkadian, if this is indeed the function of the *-u* ending there, one could just as well imagine that the infinitive was reanalyzed as a direct object in this particular variety. Conflicting evidence regarding the case ending of the paronomastic infinitive in Akkadian, Ugaritic, and Amarna Canaanite thus precludes a unified theory of its syntactic function. Different developments within the individual languages (e.g., locative-adverbial in Akkadian, nominative for a fronted object in extraposition in Ugaritic, accusative for an adverbial modifier or a direct object in Amarna Canaanite?) should certainly not be excluded.

Like Aramaic, first-millennium Canaanite has lost morphological case marking. Data from Phoenician, Moabite, Ammonite, and Hebrew inscriptions, scarce though they are, basically reflect the same usage of this construction as Biblical Hebrew. Several infinitives known from the Hebrew Bible recur in the epigraphic corpus, although such parallels are not always noted (for *pth* in *KAI* 13:6–7, a Phoenician inscription from Sidon,<sup>37</sup>) cf. Nah 3:13). The phrase *'bd 'bd 'lm* in the Moabite royal inscription (*KAI* 181:7) and its Hebrew counterparts, for which the author proposes the rendering “perish with eternal destruction”, receives a particularly nuanced discussion. Concerning the seventh-century Hebrew papyrus palimpsest from Murabba'at, a reference to the authoritative

edition by J. Renz and W. Röllig as well as A. Schüle's volume on the syntax of the pre-exilic Hebrew inscriptions should be added, even if these scholars accept the traditional interpretation of the infinitive as an inner object for emphasis.<sup>38</sup>) At any rate, the nominal origin of the infinitive absolute clearly emerges from the fact that the same pattern also underlies a few ordinary nouns in Hebrew (for example, אֲדוֹן, כְּבוֹד, לְשׁוֹן, שְׁלוֹם, and שְׁלוֹשׁ) and cognate languages. Its change into a constituent part of a complex predicate in Biblical Hebrew and perhaps other first-millennium Northwest Semitic idioms (by way of grammaticalization?) requires some more thought. König's intuition could have been quite right: there might have been a transition from a direct object to a circumstantial function.<sup>39</sup>) This reviewer, for one, feels that the author and his predecessors try to find too simple an explanation for a complex phenomenon.

One and a half pages of conclusions (133–134) conveniently summarize the author's main points and advocate a more comprehensive analysis of the other functions of the infinitive absolute. In the ensuing bibliography of his otherwise well-edited work, he consistently confuses Münster with Munich (whose German name is of course München), thereby conveying Westphalian earnestness to the elegant and light-hearted capital of Bavaria. The index is confined to biblical passages and, unfortunately, excludes both Qumran and cognate material.

There can be no doubt that Kim has written a useful book. Good sign-posting by means of frequent summaries, even on the verge of redundancy, and the employ of established linguistic frameworks allows one to keep track of the author's reasoning. While his treatment of inner-biblical developments and his somewhat oversimplifying reference to other Semitic languages turn out to be less satisfactory, which is partly due to bibliographical lacunae, he has many interesting and valuable things to say about the use and function of the paronomastic infinitive in Biblical Hebrew. On the one hand, he points out a number of relevant syntactic differences between this use of the absolute infinitive and genuine direct objects. They suggest that it should be understood as a grammatical constituent rather than a lexical one. This is one of the chief contributions of his study. His functional description, on the other hand, makes it clear that the ubiquitous “emphatic” or “intensifying” interpretation should not be taken for granted anymore. Indeed, considering various pragmatic factors associated with the notion of assertion often leads to a more precise understanding of the text. The author has added considerable plausibility to what used to be a minority opinion and has made a compelling approach more widely accessible, although he sometimes seems to have stopped halfway in executing his plan. A fuller treatment of representative passages and a broader inventory of specific nuances of assertion in various pragmatic situations remain to be desired, as does a comprehensive explanation which relates paronomasia to other uses of the infinitive absolute in Hebrew. Further research can use Kim's serviceable study as a convenient point of departure.

<sup>34</sup>) Cf. K. Beyer, “Die Sprachen Transjordaniens”, in: H. Gzella (ed.), *Sprachen aus der Welt des Alten Testaments*, Darmstadt 2009, 89–103, here p. 101–103.

<sup>35</sup>) Compare the perceptive remark by E. Blum, “Die Kombination I der Wandinschrift vom Tell Deir 'Alla. Vorschläge zur Rekonstruktion mit historisch-kritischen Anmerkungen”, in: I. Kottsieper, R. Schmitt, and J. Wöhrle (eds.), *Berührungspunkte. Studien zur Sozial- und Religionsgeschichte Israels und seiner Umwelt*, Münster 2008, 573–607, here p. 591, n. 86: “Möglicherweise beinhaltet diese rhythmische Wiederholung ein weisheitlich-gelehrtes Spiel für Kenner (zu denen die neuzeitlichen Leser nicht mehr gehören) mit verschiedenen Wortbildungen”.

<sup>36</sup>) For some background reading, see A. Gianto, “Amarna Akkadian as a Contact Language”, in: K. Van Lerberghe and G. Voet (eds.), *Languages and Cultures in Contact*, Leuven 2000, 123–32.

<sup>37</sup>) The function is left unexplained here, but a contrastive nuance (Friedrich and Röllig, *Grammatik*, §267a: “und wenn du doch öffnest und mich doch störst”) fits the context quite well, since the conditional clause follows two prohibitive utterances.

<sup>38</sup>) J. Renz and W. Röllig, *Handbuch der althebräischen Epigraphik*, vol. 1, Darmstadt 1995, p. 284 with n. 5; A. Schüle, *Die Syntax der althebräischen Inschriften. Ein Beitrag zur historischen Grammatik des Hebräischen*, Münster 2000, 89.

<sup>39</sup>) König, *Syntax*, §329b.u.