

On 'not-time' in hebrew

Abstract

During the course of researching the concepts of what is loosely called in English 'soul' (in Hebrew, a five-part, concentrically layered structure named "Nephesh-Ruah-Neshama and Hayah-Yehida") it became evident that the understanding of these concepts is intimately linked to the idea of time. The link is philosophical and philological and intimately influences etymology, linguistics, grammar, semantics; it is in short, a pre-condition for any Philomathical enquiry. Even more this is a discussion of how the 'tool' known as language affects philosophical reasoning.

Keywords: hebrew language, spatiotemporal ontology, philosophy, natural language definition, semanticism, hebrew uniqueness

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Introduction

This essay is a philosophical discussion of the impact of language upon thinking concepts. The most primary reasoning tool is language hence the semantic regularity found in languages. Semantic regularity is a precondition for language utility. Yet as we all know semantic regularity differs greatly among languages and indeed may sometimes be used to classify languages into 'families'. A language is defined by Hopcroft and Ullman as a "...body of words and methods of combining words used and understood by a considerable community".¹ A basic notion of linguistic studies is division of languages into two sets that of 'natural languages' and that of 'formal languages'. Conceptually natural languages 'occurred serendipitously' while formal languages were/are created intentionally-both are of course 'man-made'. Natural languages are those occurring autonomously and are used by groups of people with a common set of characteristics such as English, Russian, Chinese or Cherokee. Formal languages are those abstract languages viewed or represented (or can be viewed) as a mathematical system. Examples of these are computer languages (e.g. Pascal, Fortran, Basic, Cobol, C, Java and thousands more) mathematical languages (e.g. binary alphabet (0, 1), calculus, trigonometry and many more) symbolic logic languages and etcetera. Note that formal languages may not necessarily be "used and understood by a considerable community" but may be used by a very small community and this is quite acceptable.

Paul Ziff in his seminal work on natural language 'Semantic Analysis'² very strongly makes the case that all natural languages have an additional characteristic in common above those described by Hopcroft and Ullman and that is that they possess a clearly definable spatiotemporal definition. That is complete utterance comprehension is highly dependent upon knowledge of the spatial and temporal setting of the utterance (notice use of singular). This is much more than just context. To gingerly illustrate this a fluent speaker of English may be quite capable of comprehending Rowling but have difficulty with Shakespeare find Chaucer incomprehensible and will have no idea what Beowulf is the last having even a different alphabet despite all of them being called English. Yet the temporal differences are a mere few hundreds of years. A clear spatiotemporal continuity exists; yet the degree of comprehension difficulty is seemingly collinear with distance in time between author and reader. This essay does not discuss morphemes or morphological analysis or syntactic or non-syntactic regularity. In a certain narrow sense the discussion is ontological in

that the spatiotemporal domain is discussed. (Grigoris Antoniou and Athanasios Kehagias said: "An ontology defines the terminology of a domain it describes the concepts that constitute the domain and the relationships between those concepts").³ In short the discussion is not one of standard semantic analysis but tries to limit this discussion to this aspect discussed by Ziff as a four-dimension spatiotemporal continuum. A fundamental pillar of this discussion is Ziff's assertion that "The problem of determining what semantic regularities (if any) pertain to a particular utterance type is exceedingly complex. Both so-called "observational" and "theoretic" consideration are involved. ... one notes that an utterance token it is uttered at a certain spatiotemporal position."⁴ This principle is asserted for the English language in Ziff's discussion but is (supposed) congruent for all natural languages.

This essay shows that Hebrew is not congruent with this assertion that Hebrew lacks this spatiotemporal dimension and that Hebrew is unique to human experience. Hence Ziff's fundamental principle shows that a third category of language needs to exist: natural; formal and Hebrew.

The role of hebrew

Hebrew is a language used by humans for the purpose of communicating. (This essay does not discuss the idea or concept of use of the language by 'non humans' nor other metaphysical or physical aspects though this aspect may have relevance in other contexts.) Any person can and may use the language with the only precondition being that the effort is invested to learn a ('sufficient') vocabulary the rules of use and the regularities of context- any utterance that is necessitated can be uttered and that utterance may be classified as valid speech. The language is written, read and spoken. It has a full complement of components, alphabet, grammar, syntactic and semantic constructs, rules and regularities. One can assert command, refer, state and order, again all forms of normal communication occur in Hebrew. In so far as a speaker of Hebrew has need anaphoric substitutes and antecedents occur and are generally used by speakers of the language as are situational and conditional utterances.

In short it is a human tool and humans use tools for their purposes. Humans also adapt as well as adopt their tools. In the case of languages this adaptation may take any of many forms including addition of words and word-forms modification of these and grammatical evolution. Indeed Ziff's 'Principle of Information' tell us that "...the information-content of an element is inversely proportional to the size

of its distribution"⁵ (E.g. the American idiomatic 'you know' which through ubiquitous use has become utterly devoid of meaning; a mere space filler.) This Principle is one of the mechanisms of language evolution. How do these concepts inter relate vis-à-vis translations of texts between languages? We know that language is used to express and communicate complex and abstract ideas. How are ideas expressed in one language 'bridged' or carried over to another language?

The possibility exists that translations of complex texts from Hebrew to other languages not only 'lose something in the translation' but may in many cases be principally incorrect with that incorrectness being such that only experts can detect its occurrence. This assertion is based upon a fundamental difference between Hebrew and other languages. However with this incorrectness assuming it occurs comes a marked conceptual misleading of the reader such that as the wag once said "I know you believe you understand what you think I said but I am not sure you realize that what you heard is not what I meant." Of course if this happens 'too' frequently we may be forced to conclude that there may exist contrasts between languages that do not allow for translation of fundamental concepts beyond the trivial or mundane. Such a case; to the best of the knowledge of this author; has not yet been documented between languages, though many are difficult to translate. (Notoriously the American Army used Navajo operators in World War II to frustrate enemies listening to conversations as the language is difficult and is not widely known. However this does not infer that it is a priori impossible to translate just exceptionally difficult.)

Commonly in translation attempts (as well as in learning) words are first (most conveniently) correlated at the level of nouns. Generally nouns that describe concrete objects can be easily translated. However many words and even nouns are associated with conditions instead of or in addition to or in parallel with a concrete object. Such conditions can be restrictive to a spatiotemporal context (or conversely to the absence of such). For instance Hebrew contains many words that represent the concept of 'liquid precipitation' (not hail; sleet or snow) while English contains only the one word, rain.⁶ These various words are decidedly not synonyms. There are significant differences between the various words in Hebrew which will not be within the ready grasp of a native English speaker. A 1:1 mapping of the terms or more correctly a 1: n mapping is misleading and inappropriate but an alternative may not be readily available. Such problems occur of course in any translation between languages and are unavoidable because each human language encapsulates within it the human experiences of the collective that uses the language. When the issue is a noun form such as 'rain' then this can be dealt with at some level and the fundamental concepts will 'cross over' from the input language to the output language reasonably well understood even if the ideas and concepts are not perfectly transmitted. One may translate the word YORE as 'first rain of the season' and MALKUSH as 'last rain of the season' but the latter certainly does not infer the concept of GESHEM ZIHRI which is a part of the meaning of the Hebrew word MALKUSH. Describing this as 'masculine precipitation' is likely to be somewhere between meaningless and confusing. Semantic analysis of such a resulting translation may leave somewhat to be desired and may frequently be misleading. And of course basing any deep analysis on such texts leaves the analyst open to severe criticism by those familiar with the basic texts from which they were 'taken' so inappropriately.

*I know you believe you
understand what you think I
said, but I am not sure you
realise that what you heard*

Of course 'rain' is one of the most trivial of examples. A much more complex example might be illustrated by the Hebrew word LEHASPIK which is a verb form from the root 'enough' and no equivalent exists in English whatever. In other words neither a 1:1 nor a 1: n mapping exists to communicate this concept accurately. And of course this word is far from the only such case. Hundreds of such appear but as stated these types of 'technical' translation difficulties can usually be dealt with at some level frequently via substitution of multiple words for the single word in the original making the resulting text significantly more complex but not necessarily less usable. This is highly appropriate to Ziff's well-known "Occam's Eraser" principle "There is no point in multiplying dictionary entries beyond necessity".⁷

Rubber banding

From this one derives the concept of "Rubber Banding". A translation of a text from Hebrew to (say) English is a 'reasonable' representation of the original ideas because the individual utterance parts contain features that are or that represent a close correlation between the two textual representations. Perhaps certain words in the translation remained untranslated and lingered in their vernacular just as I did in the 'Abstract' to this essay when I used the terms Nephesh-Ruah-Neshema. This clearly subsumes two assumptions that the reader understands (or can understand) this much of the original Hebrew and that there is no practical way to translate these words into English. (Another possible instance of this form would not be use of proper names that can never nor should they ever be translated.)

Untranslated words appear in order to forcefully prevent utterance misunderstanding. The remainder of the text, the translated parts we called "a reasonable representation"-assuming an exact translation is not or may not be possible or may be possible only for some parts and not for other utterance parts. This precision variability is 'rubber banding' of the texts' correspondence. That is various parts have various levels of correspondence to the original ideas some perhaps even identical and some quite tenuous. A person equally fluent with both languages may well scrutinize each text and find various occurrences of correlation with which a disagreement appears to that person. Does the observed incongruity mean (or infer) that the translator was less fluent than the observer or was 'wrong'? Not necessarily because in any such rubber banding there is room for interpretations, interpolations and opinions. Universal agreement would be very rare indeed and infrequently necessitated.

This is so for any process of translation of text from one language to another. How much more so when basic philosophical views of the languages are quite distant from one another? Of course different texts will have various length rubber bands. One may presume that texts discussing well-known 'modern' topics (e.g. computing resources) will likely be simpler to develop correspondence for than texts that discuss abstract concepts such as metaphysics. This essay contends

that a large discrepancy in spatiotemporal worldviews represent one of the largest of such differences possible. Rubber banding refers to the idea that words in language variants (such as dialects or idiolects) may remain connected despite a very significant distance in spatiotemporal setting. The connection may be stretched thin perhaps so thin that a 'normal' undiscerning eye may no longer easily perceive it though a sensitive 'finger' still does. There may even be a 'bend' in the connection perhaps obfuscating it further. (For instance how 'Bill' become a nickname for 'William'.) The connection is such that at any time it may snap back to a previous reality making the connection clearer once again. Such 'snap-back' conditions in a language such as English may be rare. There exists no mechanism to maintain the anchor. In Hebrew the mechanism for this is completely clear and visible to all the Torah and Bible. Resuscitated or reincarnated Hebrew? What of the oft stated idea that Hebrew was a 'dead' language and that it was 'rejuvenated' or 'resuscitated' or 'reincarnated' somehow 'artificially' when the state's independence was reconstituted in 1948? This is a critically important question for if it has any real basis then discussion of a time dimension may be moot to begin with as it had been frozen in time at some more-or-less determined date or period in history.

However this entire concept is fallacious. A myth created seemingly for political purposes and not based upon solid historical evidence or in depth scrutiny of the evidence. This author interviewed hundreds of elderly immigrants to Israel from Tripoli (in present-day Libya) Georgia, Persia, Yemen⁸ and India (South India/Cochin; not North India). In all of these communities; Hebrew was commonly spoken between Jews - not simply among scholars or rabbis but among the common folk. Under no circumstance should this be construed to imply that these were the only places where Hebrew was commonly spoken. Not only was Hebrew not 'dead' or even slumbering it was quite vibrantly alive. While it is true that for most European communities particularly those from Eastern Europe and Russia Hebrew ceased to be a spoken language among the common people probably around the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries for many large communities this was not the case this cessation never occurred.

Clearly Jews did not use Hebrew with the non-Jewish people surrounding them. Just as the German, Polish and Russian Jews did not use Yiddish with those around them. Quite the opposite was the case considerable anecdotal evidence exist that use of Hebrew formed a tool for superior business secrecy which enhanced Jewish Business Networking so prevalent throughout the Jewish world during all of the centuries of exile and scattering. All this is of course in addition to an amazingly rich and constantly expanding literature base that existed in all areas of the scattering from China to Yemen from the Caribbean to the Land of Israel and during every period of our history. This literature included religious and secular poetry medical and scientific texts as well as scholarly texts of a 'purely' religious nature. Certainly millions of Jews living in Israel until the seventh century knew Hebrew not as a barely acknowledged second but as one of two primary tongues (Aramaic was the second of them until the seventh century Arabic Jihad). The Talmudic period ended in the sixth century.^{9,10} More so in Israel than in Babylon, more evident in the Jerusalem Talmud than in the Babylonian Talmud, Hebrew was clearly the dominant language in use for literature. It is absurd to view the vast richness of texts to come out of Tzfat and Gaza in the sixteenth century and to assume that Hebrew was not quite vibrantly alive in every sense of the concept. What exactly occurred in Israel during this hiatus from the seventh through the sixteenth centuries is not well documented. However in many other places considerable

writings occurred. As stated we know for certain that Hebrew was a well-used language of business and coded business correspondence was common. Maimonides for instance maintained extensive Hebrew correspondence (e.g. his Yemenite correspondence). The writings of the Spanish community in literature (secular and religious) and their communication with the rest of the Jewish world, several GNIZOT around the world, also provide abundant evidence. This does not of course discount or discredit works written by Jews in other languages such as Arabic during this period.

However be that as it may and even if Hebrew was relatively dormant (which as stated is refuted by overwhelming objective empirical evidence) the most basic fact remains clear. One can today despite all syntactic, semantic and vocabulary developments pick up and read Maimonides' treatises (Egypt) Even Gavirol's poetry (Spain), Israel Ben Moses Najara (Gaza, Israel) or thousands of other additional works written between the seventh and sixteenth centuries as completely vernacular. This is a highly telling fact.

Finite states in language

A language is a socio-cultural artifact consisting of words utterances, rules, grammar, syntax, semantics and regularities of usage. Can a language have states and state transitions? Given that a state corresponds to various ways that a system may react to external and/or internal stimuli under varying environment variable values. Does a language as a human artifact react to stimuli? Well clearly certain kinds of stimuli affect language. An obvious example is conquering. When England was conquered in 1066 there was a process of affectation upon the vernacular dictated by the newly formed class structure. To the internal observer this may not have seemed overly obvious at least not in situ. To an objective observer with the advantage of hindsight there is no question of this having occurred.

The conquering of one people by another is of course an extreme example despite its frequency of occurrence throughout history and despite that conquering does not a priori 'defeat' language. Affectations of language can and do occur under much more normal actions such as intermingling of peoples. Some aspects of this will be evident in each of the groups adopting idioms from the other. Another aspect may be that of a gradual change in accent and pronunciation. This may occur even if the causes of the change have disappeared and may no longer be discernible. Alexenberg¹¹ discusses as a 'system' a field an individual and the individual's life-space environment. The system changes (grows?) as a progression of state changes over time. These states evolve as a result of stimuli which may be external, internal or combinations. Alexenberg's book uses Venn Diagrams to depict these changes. But are these states 'finite' and can they be represented via a mathematically sound model? Can 'reasonably accurate' prediction be practiced as a result of this? And finally can this model be applied to the language or is this too narrow a field for prediction?

Language as stated is a tool for communicating. As such language is an information tool. "Aesthetic creation is the combination of sets of information in fresh and meaningful ways. The freshness or novelty of a newly formed combination is inversely proportional to the probability of its occurrence"¹² However in language a truly novel occurrence (utterance) may mean some new and wonderful poetry or it may mean utter nonsense incomprehensible to any speaker of the language. One may think of E. E. Cummings' "anyone lived in a pretty how town" which if taken outside of the realm of poetry can be nothing but nonsense yet in this context is (at least to this author)

marvelous poetry. Here we have novelty with low probability of occurrence clearly creative. Is this evidence of a 'state transition'?

In order to answer this one would need to be able to objectively measure the affect this utterance had upon the language. Such measurement may be possible though this author has not discovered any empirical evidence that such has occurred (for this poem or any other). Some anecdotal evidence exists to attest to affects of aesthetic creation upon language (e.g. the frequency of use of the image of Marilyn Monroe's blowing skirt) but this does not seem to have been objectively measured. Thus an objective answer to this question does not seem to exist at this time. As this essay is not a general discussion of language or linguistics; the general questions raised here are left here unanswered; for further research. They appear to be cogent questions concerning natural languages. However the question at issue here is that of Hebrew and the effects of time. Were these phenomena measured the issue of language evolution over time might be less arduous.

This essay submits that were such stimuli actual state transitions then a text written (say) 2000 years or more ago would be if not unintelligible to a normally proficient person at least beyond normal difficulty. In every naturally occurring language this is indeed the case. In Hebrew such is not the case. Any normally proficient person in the Hebrew language can read for instance Megilat Taanit written more than 2000 years ago (at least a generation before destruction of the Second Temple)¹³ and not have any comprehension difficulties-barring normal issues of writing style.¹⁴ 'Rubber banding' has prevented the transitions from distancing the language. This is despite external stimuli of the most profound and frequently horrific nature including conquering, enslavement, rendition, transfer and practically every other possible effort to cause such affect. This is unprecedented for any language other than Hebrew for any people other than Hebrew speakers. The 'machine' model may be applicable to other languages it clearly is non-applicable with Hebrew.

Foreign' analysis of hebrew's view of time

This essay describes and examines the Hebrew Notion of Time albeit in restricted scope (i.e. not every aspect of time is herein examined). The subject cannot be avoided nor should it. Many authors and researchers have examined this issue perhaps hundreds. No attempt is made to review them all or to claim coverage such is clearly out of scope of this essay. (This is not a survey article.) A sample of articles is discussed for issue perspective. Time is viewed differently in the Hebrew language and in Jewish literature and thought (note intentional use of the logical operator 'AND') as compared to Western literature and thought i.e. Greek-philosophy based. (While this comparison is not limited to a single language this discussion is limited to English.) In what way or ways is this difference expressed? Objectively in examining such a cross-language issue one must acknowledge that objective observers need to position themselves in 'the speaker's point of view' as opposed to viewing from the hearer's point of view. In Ziff's phrase¹⁵ "... one must take care to distinguish between what a speaker means what an element means and what an element connotes." A daunting task in any case

Literature Review

Thienhaus¹⁶ examines 'Jewish Time' in the context of Freud's work and cross-references Freud's methods to his religio-cultural background. The article opens with the statement: "Biblical Israel's

concept of time differs fundamentally from contemporary usage. In classical Hebrew thinking there is no conceptual separation between an event and the time in which it occurs." The same (opening) paragraph also states: "...rather than distinguishing between past, present or future." Thus Thienhaus casts in concrete in the article's opening a first thesis concerning both the Hebrew language albeit limited by the word 'biblical' and Hebrew thinking albeit limited by the word 'classical'.

Further down under the heading "Hebrew Time" is stated "... students of Biblical Hebrew learn that tenses in Hebrew cannot be equated with tenses in English." This statement is further footnoted with the assertion that "Hebrew therefore knows of no past, present or future tenses but has instead a Perfect and an Imperfect" (emphases in the original). This is emphasized with the assertion that: "But Hebrew tenses emphatically do not designate time segments along a line from the past through the future..." This is also footnoted by "This statement no longer applies as categorically to mishnaic or certainly not to medieval Hebrew. CF for instance the Siddur's HASHEM MELECH, HASHEM MALACH, HASHEM YIMLOCH LEOLAM VAED". (G-d rules, G-d ruled, G-d will rule forever-both translation and transliteration are mine and not in the original.)

Use of the word 'Hashem' instead of one of HIS names is in accordance with Exodus 20:6 the fourth of the Ten Commandments and the thirtieth of the 613 mitzvot. The concept is to "put a fence around a mine field" so that even unwittingly a person will not cause damage nor hurt himself. Basic Judaic philosophy accepts that voicing an utterance is an act. In Judaism the expression "actions speak louder than words" is nonsensical words ARE actions. Hence for something very central like such a commandment fences are employed to prevent unwitting utterance of something that ought not to be said. Use of the word "Makom" discussed below is conceptually identical. Interestingly Thienhaus' example statement is incorrect. This is neither Mishnaic nor Medieval Hebrew as he claims but is actually biblical. Referencing a Concordantiae (Concordant) such as that by Avraham Even Shoshan one finds that the utterance of HIS (Tetragrammaton) name together with the word Malchut occurs 3:838 times in the Bible. The statement 'HASHEM MELECH...' (Referenced above) is an amalgamation from three sources. Significantly all three are forms of time references viz. present tense, past tense and future tense-one might add, precisely as these tenses occur in English. Such as these appear repeatedly throughout Biblical Hebrew, an example of this is Chapter 93 of Psalms from where the second utterance in the phrase is taken. Both the first and third verses contain tense references. While the third utterance is Exodus 15:18 what is referred to as the "Song of the Sea" one cannot be much more 'Biblical' than that one would trust the central theme of the Torah.

Thus one sees two things quite clearly. Firstly his thesis is based upon very strict limitation of Hebrew to what is chosen to be called 'biblical' or 'classical' though neither of these statements is defined-does 'biblical' refer to all books of the bible, does it include books which are not acceptable within the accepted corpus of books or what? 'Classical' is at least as difficult a term. Shteinvalz for instance defines successive 'classical periods'.¹⁷ Lacking a clear definition of terms makes the methodology of enquiry difficult (at least) to assess. Note that not all biblical books are written in Hebrew or entirely in Hebrew and that writing styles vary enormously even within the book of Psalms (written by ten different persons). Even the name "Moshe" given by Batya Pharaoh's daughter is debated as whether or not it is

Hebrew or Egyptian. (Moshe was three months old at the time he was found by her. Jews give a child his name on the eighth day- Moshe's given name was Tuvya. 'Moshe' may have been meant more as a title than a name originally.) Secondly even within this limitation, undefined, impractical as it may be the facts are not empirically supported.

"Duration is the decisive qualitative characteristic of Hebrew time." And "Time only exists as a subjective experience." Yet precisely in the most central event in the Bible, the Exodus, there is no discussion of duration whatever until mishnaic times. On the third page of the article appears the assertion "It speaks the language of history rather than geography." Yet this despite perhaps the most fundamental concept in Torah (told by Rashi's unequivocal affirmation against the first statement of Genesis in the name of the Tanne Rabbi Yitzhak) that the bible 'ought' to have begun with "This is the first month..." (Exodus 12:1-2) That is there is a very clear assertion throughout Jewish history and thought that the Torah is definitely NOT a discussion of history. To emphasize "it speaks the language of history" is a very difficult contention totally in contention with all Jewish commentary; from all periods. Thienhaus then goes on to use this complex assertion set to state that Freud despite his well-known secular views was strongly influenced by this Hebrew concept because he grew up in a religious home as a child. No empirical evidence is presented or suggested to link Freud's education with 'classical' Hebrew or Judaic thought. And certainly even if a link were established with such philosophical ideas there exists no evidence of an artificial limitation of this supposed Hebrew expertise to only one period which if such were to exist would be unprecedented in history of Judaic education. For example nobody studies Bible in Hebrew without reference to Rashi¹⁸ (at very least) and other commentators from the Middle Ages-all of whose commentaries are written in a different style and idiolect. Thus scholarly exposure to a single idiolect is essentially impossible in addition to impractical.

Professor Littlejohn¹⁹ declares that "The Book of Ecclesiastes is unique among books of the Bible and especially the Old Testament in presenting anything like a direct statement on time (Eccl. 3:1-8)." This idea is taken further in the succeeding paragraph; with the assertion "The Hebrew mind thought in concrete terms and did not engage in the sort of abstract speculation we know so well from the Greeks. Just as the Hebrews did not speculate about famous Greek questions such as what is truth? Or what is justice? Neither did they offer arguments or theories about the question what is time?" This can indeed; only be classed an odd utterance as there exist entire tractates of the Mishna and Talmud which discuss nothing but these issues. "Unlike a modern American; a Hebrew would not say; "I don't have enough time" as though time were like so many coins in a pocket or so much liquid in a glass." This is; indeed; a fascinating statement of abstract belief. Yet; Hebrew has a verb for expressing this very idea LEHASPIK-while English does not. While this verb is not 'classical' the conceptual frameworks that allow it as part of the language certainly are (more on this aspect below under corpus).

Littlejohn states "...there is no passage in the Old Testament that speaks about time..." And also "Time was not an abstract something over and above events. Herein lay the basic difference between the Hebrews and the Greeks." Littlejohn's statement "... events and persons were differentiated and arranged not by their position in chronological sequence to each other but according to the impact of their occurrence..." on the other hand is well supported by the well-known notion in Jewish philosophy that 'there is no

early and late in Torah' asserting the bible is NOT historical. (See the above discussion of Thienhaus.) A common contention in Jewish philosophy is that no discussion of biblical meaning is of any value without the presupposition that the discussion is one of ethics and morals. Everything else is there to serve that purpose. (See the above discussion of Rabbi Yitzhak.)

Yet the very discussion of the acts of creation is a discussion of the passage of time: day one, day two... day six & etc. Note that this is a discussion of the passage of time even before time existed during the first half of creation- admittedly that is a most difficult concept. Shirts²⁰ view of Hebrew is a bit better defined. It obviously includes the entire bible all 24 books. Expression of his view of Hebrew is well illustrated by his statement "Exodus 24:7 illustrates this rather graphically in Israel's response to Gods giving of the Law: na n'aseh venishma' "We shall do then we shall obey." "Use of the word 'then' enjoinders a well perceived sequence of events. However the Hebrew does not really state that. The Hebrew which he quotes uses what is called VAV HAHIBOR the 'and' of joining (quite literally the 'join' of the language of logic). There is not sequence implied or designated in this statement one of the most critical statements of the entire Torah. But rather the statement is one of humility that we shall do even if we do not comprehend first one 'does' then one makes the effort to comprehend. But 'first' in this sense is not a sequential act but a statement of acceptance of priorities. No conceptualization of Jewish thought is valid without deeply understanding this fundamental concept of obeying the Word as the precondition rather than comprehension of 'whys' and 'wherefores' as the precondition.

Shirts then go on to state an excellent idea "Instead of thinking from cause to effect as we do the ancient Israelites reason from effect to cause!" I would tend to agree with this statement except that I would eliminate the word 'ancient' and submit that one of the reasons Israel as a culture has attained a reputation of excellence in major engineering systems is that we still think thusly. This is a basic instance of cultural influence affecting how complex artifacts are viewed and dealt with. Shirts assert that: "The Jewish festivals were not established as mere holidays either. They proceeded to form the rhythms of ancient Israel in time. Going further the time of the festivals was the one and only "time" in the full sense of the word. The festival alone supplied Israel with the content of time in the full sense of the word. The observance of these festivals was not by any human arrangement." One of the most interesting characteristics of the Hebrew calendar is the careful balance between 'natural rhythms' and human actions. 'Human arrangement' is both fundamental and critical to observance of festivals. Two facts illustrate this well. Months are determined by the lunar phase. But we are specifically enjoined that WE must perceive them and WE must make this decision and that it is NOT a purely celestial phenomenon-the word used is not 'my month' (HODSHI) but rather 'your months' (HODSHECHEM). A celestial occurrence is the triggering mechanism; not the decision point.

Secondly the third 'official holiday'²¹ that of Shavuot is purely determined by an actual count of exactly fifty days from Pessah from the exodus a specific human act and not celestial occurrence. No date for the holiday is given but only derived via action. As a matter of fact part of the basic difference between Jews and Karaites was based upon these very facts. How can eminent scholars have arrived at these conclusions? This essay submits that there appear to be three reasons for this; two are methodological and one conceptual. One can surmise an historical motivational issue but no proof is proffered as

this is out of scope of this essay.²² As Einstein's dictum states "Not everything that is countable counts and not everything that counts is countable." Time is measurable eminently so 'even' in Hebrew this just is not a central issue of reality that Jewish thought finds central. These eminent gentlemen possess knowledge of Hebrew words but no comprehension of the Hebrew language and this is the central point. Artificial limitation of the Corpus examined while semantic analysis knows that a purely ostensive definition is mythical²³ a clear understanding of a language devoid of ALL ostensive definitions is just as far from reality. Even more so an attempt at deep language comprehension under circumstances devoid of ostensivity is certain to lead the analyst to deep misunderstandings. One must not confuse inclusion (or exclusion) of an individual word into a corpus with fundamental change to the corpus.

All the authors discussed herein discuss 'Biblical Hebrew' as an attempt to limit the corpus with which they work. This is presented as though this dialect of Hebrew is a significantly different language than other dialects of Hebrew. As a matter of fact they are not even separate dialects but only idiolects that are quite minor differences. The reality is that they are closer than American English and British English. In that we hint at one aspect of the inadequacy neither the former nor the latter are defined. Is 'American English' that spoken in Boston in the Lower East Side of Manhattan in Alabama or in Chicago? Is 'British English' that spoken in North London in Liverpool or in Scotland or Wales? Clearly these questions are not 'really' answerable.

Avot is a work of monumental importance in Jewish thought written over a 500-year period by many scholars (though edited by one around the year 200 CE). Yet despite this remarkable breadth of composition over years and scholars it is one unified system of thinking; and both reflects and affects Jewish culture to this day.¹⁷ No equivalent exist in English nor can it as over that period of time the language has changed unrecognizably -that is where such a work to be contemplated those that began it would not comprehend those that completed it and vice-versa. Yet Avot is a pillar of all Jewish thought; mostly for its clarity, linguistic as well as moral clarity. Its composition began during the beginnings of the Mishnaic period of Hebrew and completed just prior to the beginnings of the Talmud. During its composition the land in which it was written was twice conquered the spiritual and political capital was destroyed and large portions of the population were forcibly enslaved. Two wars were fought in which nearly a million people from both sides were killed. Yet no traces of these upheavals are to be detected in the language and in fact it is equally readable today by anyone. Of what relevance is an artificial limitation of the corpus to Avot?

What is certain is that so-called Biblical Hebrew is understood by all users fluent in the language of Hebrew just as is that which is spoken daily on the streets of Jerusalem or Beer Sheva today despite irrefuted existence of idiolectic differences that occurred over time. Can we be certain are differences significant enough to perceive it as a separate corpus? Most importantly do bridge texts exist those 'rubber-band' texts of different periods? One of the issues with the authors discussed is a lack of empirical support. Can the claims made here be supported with empirical evidence? The way to show this empiricism is via 'bridge texts' that cross over from one domain to another. In Judaism the Bible is divided into three parts Torah, Prophets and Writings. The first part 'Torah' consists of the so-called 'Five Books of Moses' Genesis, Exodus, etc. The third part includes

first among others Psalms. Chapter 90 in Psalms begins; "A prayer of Moshe..." For those that may decide to question the attribution one can only reply that the same source that attributes this chapter to Moshe attributes Genesis to him as well. To dispute one is to dispute it all. If the 'Mosaic' first five books are in Moshe-idiolect then so is this chapter of Psalms. Yet the entire chapter discusses time in some of the most beautifully poetic language in all of human literature. Once again time not only is not 'not included' in the language but is an integral most beatific part.

A second bridge exists. Here the bridge spans farther. In the Bible there exists a mitzvah to bless after the meal. This consists of three parts written during Biblical times and an additional part written during Mishnaic times. The first part of the three is attributed to Moshe. Once again texts bridge from the 'earliest' to later with no issue; problem or readily discernible change in idiom other than legitimate writing style. Thus we extralinguistically empirically show (via observation and text comparisons) that a connection exists and remains valid. Intra-linguistic (information) empirical evidence is presented above.

Inadequacy of semantic analysis

Semantic analysis is a critical component of linguistics and of linguistic research. However 'analysis' is a misused and often overused word frequently taken as if it were synonymous with thinking or reasoning. It most decidedly is not! Analysis is one of eight 'thinking techniques' or tools. This essay does not discuss this issue and one can disagree with the list or enumeration of techniques.²⁴ What is cogent to this discussion is existence of a list of techniques (of length X) and that analysis alone is insufficient for a thorough understanding of any artifact as complex as a language and even less so as a tool for comparison of two or more languages. "Understanding of what is said always calls for something over and above merely knowing what meaning each of the elements of an utterance may have".²⁵

All of these discussions and also the others 'represented' by them as scholarly as may be use techniques of analysis or based upon analysis but do not enhance their learning posture further via additional techniques such as synthesis interpolation or abstraction. This inherent methodological weakness causes inevitable 'error creep' distorting results. It may be reasonable to assume that analysis alone can be used to examine one language in a stand-alone manner as Ziff did, though many have disagreed with this as well. However from this method to comparison of that one language with others using this limited method is inadequate. Can one understand a meaning for the utterance 'the soul of a language'?²⁶ It is known that in Hebrew each letter contributes towards word meaning. For instance the letter TET infers conceptual 'wetness' 'moisture' or 'fluidity'. Every letter in Hebrew contributes its abstract individuality to the whole which is the word. A word is a logical sum of its letters. Thus the word PANIM can mean nothing other than face though the face need not be that of a person or corporate being. TAL means dew. SHULHAN must mean table. The logical sum of the characters incorporating the word determines a meaning that no scientific or pseudo-scientific surmise can alter. Rudimentary meaning of each and every morphological element of Hebrew is iron welded to the content and sequence of characters constructing that word. No other language contains such a link but rather the words' spelling are based upon present or historical utterance pronunciation (e.g.; color or colour?). Not so in Hebrew. The spelling and meaning are codetermined. Analysis alone; cannot adequately deal with this construct.

Conceptuality of time

Genesis the first book of the Bible begins its discussion with a depiction of creation. To understand the Hebrew and Jewish concepts of time one must be aware of several points. In fact exactly seven points these bridge the gap between Creation and Exodus-the two most significant events in human history.

- a. Creation is as its name implies the 'first' thing that occurred of significance. Note: 'of significance'-in Jewish thought there were occurrences prior to creation (albeit these are not germane to this discussion).
- b. Creation occurred over six days. The first three of which were devoid of time, time had not yet been created. Place was created before time. Time began only on the fourth day. A poignant question may be asked. It is well known that Jews call HIM 'MAKOM' ('place'). Saying "HE is the place of the universe but the universe is not HIS place"²⁷ Why can we not also call HIM 'ZMAN' (time)? Clearly the same argument concerning time can be made as concerning place that all time (times) are 'with' HIM. The answer is that 'place' is more universally encompassing than is time as it existed before and time was created within place as one of its characteristics. By the bye energy was also created within both place and time but again this is out of scope here. Torah clearly defines a hierarchy of place; time; energy in creation.
- c. In Hebrew the day extends from sunset to sunset and neither from sunrise nor some arbitrary point during the night (or day). Each day evolves from darkness into light and that ordering is highly significant philosophically.
- d. The word for 'holiday' in Hebrew is HAG which literally means circle. But not every MOED (recognizable 'period') is a HAG. There are three REGELIM defined as HAGIM, Sukkot, Pessah and Shavuot and there are two others that are specifically not called HAG, Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur (some of these are referred to in English as 'festivals'). In addition (the first) two are 'doubled' with both the first day and the last day called KODESH. This makes for a total of exactly seven days which correspond exactly with the days of Pessah in many more ways than one. Each one of these days is paralleled with a specific day of the week of Pessah.²⁸ The recurrence of this theme of sevens is important in both the philosophy of creation and in the language.
- e. The active phrase is "ASHER TIKREU OTOMBE'MOEDAM" that you will name them as their times (or into their times). This is a specific human act that we are enjoined to perform repeatedly each year and throughout the year. This procedure is a direct derivative of that act discussed above concerning months human and not celestial. We are specifically commanded and enjoined to make them 'ours' and not divine.
- f. While Hebrew (the language) and Judaism (the culture and philosophy) definitely have a concept of time progression they also have elements that are not time dependent. Thus for instance we can speak of Moshe in the present tense. When we celebrate Pessah we quite specifically speak of events as occurring to us even though it clearly was not our physical body 'us' in Egypt. Yet it is very personal for those that can empathies and that empathy is highly significant. Think about the importance of this concept for the first-generation

descendents of Holocaust slaves in that perspective it takes on a meaning of more immediacy to modern people. The phrase is 'a righteous person is called alive in death'. How is this so? The person lives in the works; deeds and words to which that person's life was devoted. That is why a person's life is an open book whose writing is only known when closed. Thus we have time and 'not time' in parallel.

- g. The Christian calendar is purely solar. The Islamic calendar is purely lunar. Only the Hebrew calendar is an amalgamation of both lunar and solar. In addition to being solar and lunar in parallel; it also contains key elements that are human-action dependent; as stated above. Thus the calendar is multi dimensional. This is a very difficult concept but a key. This is highly significant to any understanding of the concept of time in Jewish thought. Basically 'times' for men and for women differ. Men are 'more attuned' to the solar cycle of planting, agriculture and hunting (and war). Men in Judaism have many time dependent mitzvot while women are generally freed from these.¹⁶ Women are more attuned to the lunar cycle even physiologically. The Jewish is the only calendar that combines both cycles in one harmony. By the way Western culture discusses 'four seasons' and presents this division as the only possibility. In Hebrew culture there are six seasons again these are not 'solstice-equinox' based but upon an amalgamation of solar-lunar observation.

The Orthogonal notion of time

Generally speaking a significant time dichotomy exists between Western culture based in Greco-Roman mechanistic concepts and orthogonally to that; a different time vision steeped in a very different view. A Western European or American will look at the Crusades if bothering to look at history and react that this was some far-distant historical event of little modern relevance. An Arab the average 'man-in-the-street' Arab views the Crusades as personal affront-he is personally insulted at Europe for invading his country. (The fact that he, the Arab had shortly before invaded and massacred the populations of those same countries is of no relevance once it is conquered it belongs to him in perpetuity.) These diametrically opposed views are variations on the way time is perceived. One can sum up these views with a witticism in the West 'Now is History' in the east 'History is now'.

One could state the utterance "Napoleon Bonaparte was a real historical individual who lived in France some hundreds of years ago." This assertion is likely to be accepted as correct by all historians and even by the vast majority of schoolchildren. As an English language utterance is it syntactically regular and semantically standard. Even if one were to modify it by "...during the past millennium" rather than state years or any number of myriad variations this would not be likely to remove its regularity and correctness. To assert claim or infer that an equivalent statement cannot be uttered in Hebrew in Biblical or any other idiolect is incorrect. If in Hebrew-'Biblical' or 'Classical' or 'Moshe-idiolect'-"...there is no conceptual separation between an event and the time in which it occurs"²⁹ then such an utterance would not be possible. For westerners history is some blur that occurred that may or may not be of significance. To the easterner history is lived and relived every moment.

Is Hebrew in the west or in the east? Rabbi Nahman (1772-1810) was one of the leading Judaic philosophers of the eighteenth-nineteenth centuries and probably the leading philosopher of the

Hasidic movement. He taught³⁰ that the most important thing in a person's life is 'this now'. A person must look carefully at the present moment the one in which he/she is standing and not be confused by what occurred to him in the past -by alternate knows. All a person's days and hours are counted and every hour that passes can never be redone. From this one would conclude that Rabbi Nahman's view of time leans toward that as described above as the Western European view. However he also taught that, every day it is our job our function to renew the universe to renew creation. We perform this function via the 'tools' we have been provided that is the Mitzvot. This infers that a person can 'lift oneself' above time in the simplistic definition of a one dimensional vector. Indeed this is exactly what Rabbi Nahman discusses in Chapter 16³¹ (again without discussing here the esoteric aspects of this). The theme of this Chapter is personal 'Cancellation of Time'.

Judaic philosophy teaches that a person can attain control of all aspects of existence if that person is willing and strong enough to exercise such control. Of course the concept of control here refers to mental control. However he also taught specifically about time as a concept. The principle is "the larger is wisdom the smaller is time and the opposite." In other words for the true wise man time has no significance whatever. How does this work particularly with the holiday of Shavuot which is not defined by date but via an actual counting of days? Rabbi Natan, Rabbi Nahman's student described this as a deliberate redaction of wisdom in order to force 'pure' belief. A fascinating concept saying: deliberate acknowledgement of time via the 'basest' activity concerning it counting is an exercise of renewing mental control of time perception. The culmination of this process is Mount Sinai receipt of the Torah. The Torah itself counts explicitly the days of creation because the important part of creation is within time. As Rabbi Natan expresses it "The generality of Creation is 'in' Time".³²

In 'Greco-Roman-Christian' thought time is mechanistic.³³ At some undefined or semi-defined point in the past it began at some point in the future usually thought of as infinity it will (may) end and the person is at some median point-a one-dimensional vector progressing with measurable and constant velocity.³⁴ Time is a principle part of Western Martial culture. Graves defined "'Time' is our method of measuring the intervals between events".³⁵ This idea looks at the mechanism; as the end product of the enquiry system. Compare Rabbi Nahman's view with purely mechanistic Graves' or with that of the novelist Charles Morgan ("The Fountain"; c. 1932) who said "It is not time that passes away from them but they who recede from the constancy the immutability of time..." These are the themes concerning time in Western thought: mechanistic, constancy, immutability, vectorial. While in Hebrew language and Jewish philosophy we see ideas of control, subjectivity use of time as a tool. Indeed the difference of view of time between the two cultures is vast, but quite different from what has been described by Shirts, Thienhous et al.

Rabbi Joseph Haim (Baghdad 1834-1909) taught that all parts of the human body are 'within' time except the brain and the heart the brain symbolizes the seat of intelligence and the heart symbolises the seat of emotion. In his view that is why intelligence and emotion never truly sleep.³⁶ Probably the most basic concept in Jewish thought is that of 'Halaha' referring to the rules and regulations via which Jewish people regulate their lives and navigate the vicissitudes of life. The word literally means walking; and it is as opposed to Amida standing ('standing' as in 'standing still'). Angels are referred to as standing; while persons 'walk' through life. Angels neither rise nor fall in their standing of holiness while persons are on a constant pilgrimage in

which one may ascend or descend and all according to free choice. Such is the basic idea behind Judaism. The most 'well-known' aspect of Jewish religious observance that of observing the Shabbat is first and foremost a sanctification of time, sanctification via removing ourselves from its exigency, Shabbat is the 'sanctuary' of time as opposed to Mount Moriah which is the 'sanctuary' of space. From these teachers we learn that the antithesis of 'zman' (time) in Hebrew is 'Kodesh' (holiness).

Conclusion

David Walker formerly the Comptroller General of the Government of the United States discussed the philosophy of time in governance.³⁷ "...much of our world... is consumed with the here and now. Far too little thought is given to what's come before or what lies ahead. ... change is inevitable and essential for innovation. However it's also important to understand how organizations and others can manage change. ... everyone's entitled to their own opinion but not to their own facts!" A language is a tool for communication. A natural language is such a tool used in natural conditions-as opposed to a formal language which is used for 'formal' conditions (e.g. mathematics or computer programming). A case could be made for mapping a list of predictions made in Biblical sources with actual historical events. That is debatably metaphysical is not the purpose of this essay and is clearly out of scope even if that could potentially show a 'defeat' of time via language. The point of this essay is Hebrew as a language and not time whether physical or metaphysical 'not time' in Hebrew.

Pictures are said (today) to be composed of pixels. A picture is representative of a certain scene because there exists a recognizable correlation between what the picture presents and certain visual features of the represented scene. The picture (representation) may be more or less of an abstraction. Thus a simplistic line drawing may at least conceptually represent even most magnificent statuary such as Auguste Rodin's 'The Fallen Caryatid'. I purposely chose an example which can be characterized as 'timeless'. Note that the item represented may be timeless but its representation most clearly is not. The picture will be accomplished via some medium such as an electronic file a photograph (paper) or whatever. No quantity of "backups" will suffice to make this representation 'permanent' (i.e. timeless) once the media is no longer current (e.g. readable via whatever device was originally meant to allow its interpretation to a human).

Language spoken or written is a media for creating a mental picture in the listener or reader. All such media have syntax and semantics, morphology and ontology. Many multi-dimensional relationships exist in parallel. Generally the more of these relationships that are observed and perceived by the observer the greater and deeper will be comprehension of the observed physical or mental picture. An observed object can be timeless. The observation of the object never is. Despite the beauty of a Helen very, very few people can observe Homer in the original today. Hebrew like every tool like every media of expression or observation has continuously evolved-even during the periods while some tried to call it a 'dead' language. The truth we now know from myriad empirical evidence which was previously ignored or underreported that it was continuously alive, vibrant and used both written and verbally. Like all living languages. As a matter of fact that is how we have a concept of 'medieval Hebrew' - which differs somewhat from what came before and from what later evolved. But and totally at odds with every language living or 'less' living dead or dormant despite all its changes there exists no difference that changes the picture. The syntax and semantics, morphology and ontology have evolved - yet they always rubber band to prevent

mismatch. Any person fluent can read Biblical, Mishnaic, Medieval or Modern Hebrew with essentially equal fluency again with stylistic differences given their due accord. Thus Hebrew totally differs from every existing natural language.

In addition we have seen that the Hebrew / Judaic concept of time also significantly differ from that known in Western philosophy. Further research is needed to perform a similar study comparing Hebrew Time Concepts with young philosophies such as Islam or older; such as China or India. Whether Hebrew is relatively 'very old' in comparison for instance to English or eldest as according to the Theory of Edenics³⁸ is not germane to this discussion. What is critical to this discussion is how it has reacted and continues to react to the impetus to change. We have seen that even the strongest stimuli such as massive genocidal attempts or forced emigration (e.g. the Crusades or the forced displacement from Islamic countries c. 1948-1956) have not broken the rubber band; and the language retained its character in entirety. It is believed that this is unique to human history and experience.

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Conflict of interest

Author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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- Ibid pp. 49
- Hebrew has at least five different words for rain, some having plurals and some do not. The word for water in Hebrew has only a plural form, and no singular; this is also impossible to communicate via translation.
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- Specifically, the third REGEL of three, with this specific enumeration as significant.
- These have given rise to innumerable acts whose aim was to show or prove that Jews differ from those surrounding them.
- Paul Z. Semantic Analysis, Cornell University Press, 1960. p. 103.
- The eight 'thinking techniques' are 1) analysis, 2) synthesis, 3) extrapolation, 4) interpolation, 5) induction, 6) simulation, 7) abstraction and 8) dialectic. Some of these have 'subtypes'; for instance, induction has 'sub-types' of deduction and abduction.
- Paul Z. Semantic Analysis, Cornell University Press; 1960. p. 159.
- OED defines soul as spiritual or immaterial part of a human being or animal, regarded as immortal.
- Interestingly, in English this statement consists of fourteen words, while in Hebrew it is seven. The doubling of length by translation is an apt illustration of the translation principle discussed in this essay.
- Again, this essay cannot discuss this at length, as that discussion is out of scope. Various additional Moedim exist that do not enter into this discussion, at all, such as Rosh Hodesh and Purim.
- Women are generally free of fourteen time-dependent, positive mitzvot.
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