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The semantics of Hebrew NA' in the Pentateuch and former prophets.

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An meim Grempepp (wu nau die himmlisch Sprooch schwetzt)

un meinre Gremmemm

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

Beginning with a discussion of face-based linguistic politeness, this thesis investigates

the etymology of the particle נָא as well as its meaning in the Pentateuch and Former

Prophets. Though always associated with requests, the function of נָא varies according to

its syntactical usage. With the particles הִנֵּה and אִם, נָא indicates that a request is about to

be made; the interjections נָא and אַל־נָא are found too rarely to draw certain conclusions,

but even in the few attested occurrences, a request follows. With the third-person jussive,

נָא indicates that the hearer is being asked to do something, either to engage in an action

or to grant permission (redress is offered by the use of the third-person form). With the

cohortative, נָא invites input from the hearer, sometimes in the form of permission and

sometimes more generally (redress is offered by an appeal to the hearer's consent or

opinion). With the imperative and negated second-person jussive, נָא softens the force of a

directive and provides redress itself.

INTRODUCTION

Van der Merwe et al. state that "inter alia," the particle נָא "expresses a polite request and

may be translated with 'please.'"[1] The example provided is Gen 12:13, in which Abram

asks Sarai, אִמְרִי־נָא אֲחֹתִי אָתְּ, which is given the translation "Please say you are my

sister."[2] Then, however, one reads the following: "Sometimes it may even be left

untranslated."[3] Genesis 13:14 is cited, in which Yhwh says to Abram, שָׂא נָא עֵינֶיךָ ("Lift

up your eyes"). If נָא expresses a polite request, why not translate it as "please" here? Or

is this use of נָא part of the "inter alia"? No commentary is given, no guidance on why נָא

might mean "please" in the one instance but not in the other.

The translation "please" is provided by the *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*,

which links the particle with politeness, whereas *HALOT* suggests the rendering "surely,"

with the indication that the particle is emphatic. Given the disagreement (and, perhaps,

confusion) among these three references, it is time to investigate the meaning of נָא.

The following thesis explores the use of נָא in the Pentateuch and Former

Prophets. This corpus is chosen because of the predominance of prose and because of a

similarity of style that is lacking in the later books. Together, these yield a syntax that is

more consistent and predictable and therefore more suited to drawing generalizable

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[1] Christo H. J. van der Merwe, Jackie A. Naudé, and Jan H. Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar* (corr. ed.; New York: Continuum, 2002), §19.4; cf. §45.5.i. Some emphasis has been removed.

[2] Van der Merwe, Naudé, and Kroeze, *Grammar*, §19.4 (emphasis removed). Note that in this paper, nonfinal stress is always indicated, as are vowel changes due to pause.

[3] Van der Merwe, Naudé, and Kroeze, *Grammar*, §19.4.

conclusions regarding usage. And practically, it is just manageable for a master's thesis.

This study will suggest that נָא serves to stress the request-ness of an utterance.

Expressions such as הִנֵּה נָא and אִם־נָא anticipate requests. With the third-person jussive, נָא

presents a request by the speaker that the hearer act, with minimal redress to the hearer's

negative face. With the cohortative, it presents the speaker's intent or resolution as a

request or invitation that the hearer offer comment, thereby providing redress for a threat

to the hearer's positive and negative face. And with the imperative (and its negated

counterpart, the second-person jussive), it presents a command or direction as a request

(often translatable with "please") so as to provide redress for the hearer's negative face.

 The paper begins with a discussion of face and linguistic politeness, and then

summarizes and interacts with published discussions of the particle. A discussion of the

etymological derivation of נָא follows. Two chapters finish the discussion: a brief

summary of each occurrence in context and a discussion of specific examples that

support or pose a challenge for the view expressed above.

CHAPTER 1

FACE AND LINGUISTIC POLITENESS

Speakers adapt and constrain their linguistic behavior in light of the fact that their hearers

have needs like their own.[1] This chapter focuses on those needs (called "face") and the

adaptations (politeness strategies) speakers employ.

Line, Face, and Face-Work

Sociologist Erving Goffman notes the following:

> When an individual enters the presence of others, they commonly seek to
> acquire information about him or to bring into play information about him
> already possessed. They will be interested in his general socio-economic
> status, his conception of self, his attitude toward them, his competence, his
> trustworthiness, etc. . . . Information about the individual helps to define
> the situation, enabling others to know in advance what he will expect of
> them and what they may expect of him. Informed in these ways, the others
> will know how best to act in order to call forth a desired response from
> him.[2]

In each social encounter, Goffman says, a person acts out a line, "a pattern of

verbal and nonverbal acts by which he expresses his view of the situation and through

this his evaluation of the participants, especially himself." This is done, intentionally or

not, by every person in a contact, who expects the others to act out a line as well.[3] This

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[1] Barbara Johnstone, *Discourse Analysis* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2002), 124–25.

[2] Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Garden City: N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1959), 1.

[3] Erving Goffman, "On Face-Work: An Analysis of Ritual Elements in Social Interaction," in

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creates and maintains face, which Goffman defines as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact."[4] Face functions both individually and collectively: it is the image of the person and, by extension, of the people and institutions with which that person is identified or associated.

Because face functions as our public image, we are emotionally attached to it. In a contact, it is important that the line a person acts out correspond to the line that the other participants construct for him. If one comes away from a contact with the same (or better) face that he expects—that is, if one "has," "is in," or "maintains" face—he can feel confident. If one comes away with the feeling that the line constructed by the others is lower than the line he had hoped to act out—if he "is in wrong face," "is out of face," or "loses face"—he may feel hurt, embarrassed, or even disgraced.[5] Ultimately, one's face is "on loan" from society and can be rescinded if he acts in an unworthy manner,[6] and "a person's attachment to a particular face . . . provides one reason why he finds that participation in any contact with others is a commitment."[7]

Face derives from a consideration of others' impressions, and thus a person has concern not just for his own face but also for the face of the other participants in a contact.[8] We consider those who participate in their own disgrace without a care to be

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Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behavior (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1967), 5.

[4] Goffman, "On Face-Work," 5.

[5] Goffman, "On Face-Work," 6, 8.

[6] Goffman, "On Face-Work," 10.

[7] Goffman, "On Face-Work," 6.

[8] "One's own face and the face of others are constructs of the same order" ("On Face-Work," 6); Goffman coins the phrase "to give face," meaning "to arrange for another to take a better line than he might

shameless, and we consider those who can witness the disgrace of another with indifference to be heartless and unfeeling.[9] Certain rules govern interaction and balance the concerns for one's own face with concerns for others' face. Goffman thus speaks of "face-work," namely, "the actions taken by a person to make whatever he is doing consistent with face."[10] Important in this definition is the word *face*—not "his" face or "others'" face but simply "face," since the face of all parties must be considered. Face-work involves not just a mastery of the face-saving strategies used (consciously or not) by each person, subculture, and society but also a knowledge of, say, how to modify a technique to save one's own face so as to reduce any undesired effect it might have upon the face of another.[11]

Two basic kinds of face-work exist. The first approach is avoidance.[12] In order to prevent a contact that could pose a threat to one's face, one may adopt a politeness strategy (or strategies) to avoid certain topics or activities. Additionally, one may employ a diplomatic strategy for exiting a situation or for changing the subject/activity. Thus, for example, a person may choose to lie rather than reveal an shameful detail, or to "see a man about a horse" as one's turn is coming up in a shared activity that may expose one's lack of skill.

The second approach is corrective.[13] If a face-threatening act is not prevented, and

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otherwise have been able to take" (9).

[9] Goffman, "On Face-Work," 10–11.

[10] Goffman, "On Face-Work," 12.

[11] Goffman, "On Face-Work," 13–14.

[12] Goffman, "On Face-Work," 15–16.

[13] Goffman, "On Face-Work," 20–22.

the participants acknowledge that someone has suffered damage to his line,[14] a couple of options can be pursued. If the offense is to be considered minor or meaningless, the others may expect the offended person to exercise "poise" and brush off the discrepancy in line so that the encounter can simply continue.[15] If a determination is made that a blind eye cannot be turned to the offense, the offended must employ a corrective strategy. If the offended has damaged his own face, an excuse or apology may be in order; especially if the disgrace is common or unintentional (e.g., a stomach rumble), the other participants may acknowledge it but then excuse it as unavoidable. If another participant is the offender, he may offer compensation, perhaps in the form of self-denigration, to show that he takes seriously the feelings of the offended party. Or, because of the joint concern participants have both for their own face and for others', another participant may shame the offender ("Frank, don't be a jerk!"). Whatever the strategy, the offense is allowed to stand, but steps are taken to give face to the offended party so that the line he takes up for himself once again (more closely) aligns with the line others are creating for him.

Social interaction is convention- and rule-guided behavior.[16] But although the rules may vary from culture to culture, the emotional attachment to one's face and concern for preserving others' face that lead one to follow (or, sometimes, to flout) the prescribed ritual code when participating in a social interaction is universal.[17] If this is true, one should be able to find evidence of face and face-work in every society, and it

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[14] Goffman gives little detail on how this takes place, though it seems both a self-evident and logically necessary step.

[15] Goffman, "On Face-Work," 26. By "poise" Goffman means "the capacity to suppress and conceal any tendency to become shamefaced during encounters with others" (9).

[16] Goffman, "On Face-Work," 33–34.

[17] Goffman, "On Face-Work," 44–45.

should be possible to speak of general, transcultural politeness strategies.

Face-Threatening Acts and Redress

Explicitly building on Goffman's work, Brown and Levinson posit two aspects of "face."[18] *Positive face* refers to the universal desire that others accept, appreciate, and approve of both our wants and the actions/beliefs that arise from them. *Negative face* refers to the universal desire that others not impose upon or restrict our actions or thoughts. Depending on the culture, certain illocutionary acts—*face-threatening acts* (FTAs)—can challenge a person's face wants. Politeness strategies minimize the challenge posed by an FTA.

What kinds of acts threaten hearers' positive face? Anything that might suggest the speaker does not care about their feelings, desires, beliefs, or self-estimation. This includes expressions of disapproval or criticism; disagreements, challenges, or raising of emotional or divisive topics; and delivery of bad news or self-praise (both of which can be insensitive of the speaker). What kinds of acts threaten hearers' negative face? Anything that might suggest the speaker is limiting their freedom to act or to believe. This includes orders, requests, suggestions, reminders, and even offers and compliments (which the hearer might feel pressured to reciprocate).[19]

Brown and Levinson suggest that the degree of challenge posed by an FTA can be

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[18] Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson, *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 59–60. Central to their view is Goffman's assertion that face wants are probably universal; although specific face wants and the kinds of acts that threaten face may be culturally conditioned, the *fact* of face wants is not (13, 61–62). Additionally, the authors' model of politeness includes only "competent adult member[s]" who are able to behave in strategic, rational ways to achieve a desired goal (62, 64–65).

[19] Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 66–67.

arrived at via "a simple summative basis": $W_x = D(S,H) + P(H,S) + R_x$.[20] That is to say,

the (W)eightiness of an FTA is determined by the social (D)istance between the (S)peaker

and (H)earer, the relative (P)ower differential between the roles played by the hearer and

the speaker in the given context,[21] and a culturally based (R)anking of the imposition

based on its cost to the hearer in terms of the services and goods being requested.[22]

Strategies for Performing FTAs

How, then, do speakers actually perform an FTA? That depends on the degree of urgency

or desired efficiency and on the degree to which they want to maintain their hearers' face.

Bald, on-record requests without redress are direct, unambiguous, and concise:

"Close the door" and "Don't touch the stove" leave no doubt in terms of their

illocutionary force and do not "redress" (i.e., mitigate or reduce) the challenge to a

hearer's face. Brown and Levinson consider this the most efficient (in Gricean terms)

style of request: "In general, whenever S wants to do the FTA with maximum efficiency

more than he wants to satisfy H's face, . . . he will choose the bald-on-record strategy."[23]

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[20] Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 76.

[21] The words *roles* and *context* here are important but incomplete. The same speaker may possess a different power-role relative to the hearer in different situations (and thus issue the same FTA but with different weightiness), but "other situational sources of power," such as "momentary weakness in bargaining power, strength of character, or alliances," can also factor in (Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 79).

[22] Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 76–77. Bruce Fraser ("Perspectives on Politeness," *Journal of Pragmatics* 14 [1990]: 231) notes that although D, P, and R are proportionally equal in the equation, speakers might weight them *unequally* when determining their politeness strategies. Since Brown and Levinson do not intend this to be a mathematically precise formula (i.e., W_x would never equal, say, 5.0 or 7.3), this observation is interesting but not weighty.

[23] Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 95. The Gricean maxims being fulfilled here are those of quality (i.e., speaking the truth), quantity (not saying more or less than is required), relevance, and manner (being clear). For more on Grice, cf. Stephen C. Levinson, *Pragmatics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 97–166.

Such requests are not necessarily rude; rather, in the interests of efficiency, urgency, or clarity, the speaker simply dispenses with redress.

Expressions of positive politeness tend to be on record and appeal to a hearer's positive face. Redress acknowledges either that speaker and hearer share similar wants or simply that the speaker appreciates the hearer's wants:[24] the speaker's underlying strategy is to create common ground or establish solidarity with the hearer. Speakers may joke with, use a common linguistic register/variety with, call attention to,[25] praise, or otherwise identify with hearers and their wants. In requests, positive politeness enhances the hearer's positive-face wants and serves to grease the wheels for an FTA.

When Westerners think of being polite, they tend to think of *expressions of negative politeness*—ways to redress a hearer's negative-face wants by minimizing or removing the coercive force of the FTA. Negative politeness "is the heart of respect behaviour" and tends to be much more specific and focused than positive politeness.[26] Whereas positive politeness decreases social distance, negative politeness increases it by applying "a social brake" to the interaction.[27] The maxims that Brown and Levinson discuss appear below.

(1) *Be direct.* On the one hand, a bald, on-record request without redress is the

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[24] Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 101.

[25] The authors suggest that a speaker might utter "God, you're farty tonight" to redress the FTA achieved by the hearer's loss of bodily control, thereby "'notic[ing]' it and indicat[ing] he's not embarrassed by it" (*Politeness*, 104), but this seems a forced interpretation. Richard J. Watts rightly charges that because most of Brown and Levinson's examples are fictional, we do not know how actual participants in a real situation would evaluate the utterances (*Politeness* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003], 89).

[26] Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 129. In fact, most of their positive politeness examples appear also (and sometimes primarily) to redress negative face.

[27] Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 130.

most efficient and concise way to issue an FTA, but it violates the negative-politeness principle that a hearer should not be coerced. On the other hand, a request that is *indirect* (e.g., "Boy, it sure is hot out there") may be sufficiently ambiguous so as not to be coercive. How can a speaker express a request directly *and* without coercion? By being "conventionally indirect."[28]

Conventionally indirect utterances are those whose literal meaning is different from their conventionally understood illocutionary force in context. "Do you have a glass of water?" is *literally* a question that demands a yes or no answer. Similarly, "I sure could use a glass of water" is *literally* a statement of fact. But in context, (English-speaking) hearers understand both as negative-face threatening acts: *conventionally* they are requests, and this duality provides redress, making them more polite than a bald, on-record "Give me a glass of water."

(2) *Don't presume/assume.* The hearer's negative face can be redressed by wording an FTA to avoid presuming/assuming that the hearer desires or believes anything involved in the act. This can be done by phrasing the FTA as a question ("Would you mind giving me a glass of water?"), by expressing pessimism ("I don't suppose you'd happen to have any water"), by minimizing the force of the imposition ("Might you have any water—just a small glass, tap is fine?"),[29] and by giving deference ("Please, sir, I'd like a glass of water"). These formulations redress the hearer's negative-face wants by formally avoiding the presumption/assumption that the hearer is either willing or able to be imposed upon.

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[28] Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 132.

[29] Brown and Levinson note that this reduces the R_x variable in their equation (*Politeness*, 176).

(3) *Express reluctance to impinge upon the hearer.* By apologizing ("I'm sorry to trouble you, but could I have a glass of water?"), expressing hesitation ("I really don't want to bother you, but might I have a glass of water?"), or providing a compelling reason ("Wow, it's like an oven outside; could I get a glass of water?"), a speaker redresses the hearer's negative-face wants by expressing reluctance to be an imposition.

(4) *Go off-record.* One can speak in such a way that the intent is ambiguous and the hearer is left having to "make some inference to recover what was in fact intended."[30] It is the art of equivocation: the speaker couches the FTA in a fog of subtle cues and politician-like indirectness, providing plausible deniability in case the hearer is offended. Off-record requests go to the heart of Gricean conversational implicature, as the speaker knows the hearer (a) will assume that the statement is relevant and informational and (b) will fill in the missing pieces in order to arrive at a meaning. If the hearer picks the right interpretation and is not offended, good; if the hearer's face is noticeably challenged, the speaker can object, "Oh, I didn't mean that at all!" Bald, on-record statements value the intent of the FTA over the hearer's face; off-record statements are just the opposite.

<div align="center">Evaluation of Brown and Levinson</div>

Although Brown and Levinson's views strongly influenced the field in the '80s, they have been criticized. Kasper states that "the list of speech acts which adversely affect the speaker's and/or hearer's positive or negative face comprises *any* kind of linguistic action that involves the interlocutors' relationship" and that this makes communication "a

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[30] Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 211.

fundamentally dangerous and antagonistic endeavor."[31] Are we to believe that hearers'

egos are so fragile, or that they are so self-absorbed, that the slightest interruption to

whatever they are doing or thinking is grounds for offense and that social interaction thus

means speakers are constantly coming up with strategies to minimize potential damage to

their interlocutors' face? Probably not. Kasper's point is valid—given face wants, much

of communication would appear to require maintaining the relationship between the

speaker and the hearer—but exaggerated. Goffman is right that social participation

inevitably involves a commitment among the parties.

Second, the Gricean principles underlying Brown and Levinson's models of

concision and ambiguity have been called into question, and Watts says outright that "the

literature on conflictual discourse and impoliteness" has shown that not all social

interaction is cooperative.[32] This may be true, but perhaps the model can be revised rather

than scrapped.

Third, Kasper cites studies that suggest negative face works differently in non-

Western societies (especially China and Japan) and "cannot account for politeness

behavior." Watts, too, notes that face in some of these cultures is based on one's relation

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[31] Gabriele Kasper, "Linguistic Politeness: Current Research Issues," *Journal of Pragmatics* 14 (1990): 194; emphasis added.

[32] Watts, *Politeness*, 20. Watts's own model depends crucially on a distinction between politic behavior and polite behavior. Politic behavior is "linguistic behaviour which is perceived to be appropriate to the social constraints of the on-going interaction": it is behavior that participants expect. Polite behavior, on the other hand, is salient behavior: it goes beyond what is expected (19). Thus, saying "excuse me" after burping is a ritually scripted utterance and not polite (though its absence would be *im*polite). For all his emphasis on examining what lay, native speakers themselves report as polite behavior, however, he makes numerous distinctions without evidence that lay, native speakers themselves make the same distinctions. Moreover, if it truly is reasonable to assume that all human cultures have "forms of social behaviour that members will classify as mutually shared consideration for others" and that "cooperative social interaction and displaying consideration for others seem to be universal characteristics of every socio-cultural group" (14), then native speakers *should* interpret saying "excuse me" after burping as polite—and not merely politic—behavior (i.e., as "polished behaviour, socially appropriate behaviour" [17]), even if it is a "mutually shared" form of consideration (30).

to the group: "As a consequence, speech acts such as requests, offers and criticisms are not nearly as face-threatening or as imposing as they are in British, or even Greek, society." He cites a study from 1999 that "stress[es] the distinct Chinese preference for directness" and studies from the late '80s involving Hebrew and Russian speakers that challenge Brown and Levinson's principle that indirectness—even conventional indirectness—creates ritual distance and thereby redresses negative face.

Insofar as Brown and Levinson are attempting to describe a linguistic universal, this third criticism is potentially most damaging. Watts, for example, notes that in Chinese culture one may lose face by incurring a bad reputation or by not meeting the expectations of others. In Japan, face is lost when one's relative position within the larger hierarchy is not properly recognized. Finally, among the Nigerian Igbo, members are concerned about the group's self-image rather than that of the individual. From these examples, he concludes that Brown and Levinson's view of negative face is not a cultural universal.[33] However, Watts fails to see that the desire to be approved of by others is a *positive-face* want—not, as he implies, a negative-face want—and this weakens his criticism. Brown and Levinson's view of individual positive face seems difficult to assail, for even those who define their self-identity in terms of a group presumably want to be thought of as being genuine members of that group: if the group maintains positive face, the individuals benefit as well.

In the end, Brown and Levinson's view is not without its weaknesses, but their insistence (denied by Watts) that polite behavior serves to achieve and maintain social harmony seems reasonable enough. Their discussion of face and of face threats may need

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[33] Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 102–3.

some tweaking, but it probably is better to tweak their model than to abandon it. Their work studies politeness strategies in English, Tamil, and Tzeltal, but this thesis will offer preliminary conclusions regarding politeness strategies in biblical Hebrew based on an analysis of how redress might be offered for threats to negative- and positive-face wants. The choice of corpus for this investigation is again shown to be justified, for the narrative prose of the Pentateuch and Former Prophets presents verbal exchanges, thus recording both the linguistic strategies of speakers to redress FTAs and the responses of their hearers—something only rarely preserved in, say, the Latter Prophets.

CHAPTER 2

THE PARTICLE נָא: EXISTING RESEARCH

This chapter presents a survey of published research on the particle נָא. It discusses

teaching grammars, reference grammars, and published studies, the latter of which are

engaged.

Teaching Grammars

Lambdin insists that the common rendering of נָא as "please, I pray" is "rather vague" and

has little support; instead, "the particle seems . . . to denote that the command in question

is a logical consequence, either of an immediately preceding statement or of the general

situation in which it is uttered."[1] It is thus "a modal particle," and its use or absence

"cannot be predicted."[2]

Seow comments that נָא frequently accompanies "various expressions of will."

Like Lambdin, he rejects the translations "I/we pray" and "please," but this is because in

many cases "the particle clearly has nothing to do with entreaties or exhortation." Seow

states that the particle should be left untranslated because its significance "is not entirely

clear."[3] This is a change from the view expressed in the first edition of his *Grammar*, in

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[1] Thomas O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), §136.

[2] Lambdin, *Introduction*, §136.

[3] C. L. Seow, *A Grammar for Biblical Hebrew* (rev. ed.: Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 210.

which he claims that the particle serves "for emphasis or to express urgency or immediacy."[4]

Pratico and Van Pelt maintain what appears to be the traditional view: with the imperative, at least, נָא can be translated "please" but often (and especially with the jussive) can be left untranslated.[5] The glossary to their grammar provides the glosses "please" and "now."

Reference Grammars

Meyer considers נָא "ein emphatisches Element" and consistently renders it as "doch."[6] In Hebrew, this particle broke off from its role as a suffix in the Canaanite energic conjugation **yaqtulannā*, which is preserved in the third-person singular (juss. + נָא), the second-person masculine singular (impv. + נָא), and the first person (cohort. + נָא).[7]

Bergsträsser writes that נָא is a reliable indicator for distinguishing between cohortatives or jussives and their homographic *yiqtol* counterparts,[8] but he provides little insight into the meaning of the particle. The cohortative is followed numerous times by נָא, "ohne merkliche Bedeutungsverschiedenheit,"[9] but requests made with the second-

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[4] C. L. Seow, *A Grammar for Biblical Hebrew* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1987), 173; quoted in Timothy Wilt, "A Sociolinguistic Analysis of *NĀʾ*," *VT* 46 (1996): 239.

[5] Gary D. Pratico and Miles V. Van Pelt, *Basics of Biblical Hebrew: Grammar* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 211, 221.

[6] Rudolf Meyer, *Hebräische Grammatik* (3d ed.: 1969–82; one-volume repr., Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1992), vol. 1, §16.1; vol. 2, §87.5; vol. 3, §100.4 ("verstärkendes enklit.").

[7] Meyer, *Hebräische Grammatik*, vol. 2, §63.3, §87.5. Meyer is more tentative about this view, however, in the discussions in vol. 2, §63.5 ("könnte etwa") and vol. 2, §100.4 ("vielleicht").

[8] Gotthelf Bergsträsser, *Hebräische Grammatik* (1918–29; repr., Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1986), vol. 2, §10b.

[9] Bergsträsser, *Hebräische Grammatik*, vol. 2, §10d.

and third-person volitives are "gemildert" by the particle,[10] and the third-person volitive

with נָא is merely a polite circumlocution for a request. In the last case (and then only in

two examples) Bergsträsser translates the particle as "bitte."[11] He holds that the

cohortative in הָ‏ corresponds to the Arabic short energic *yaqtulan*.[12]

In his *Grammar*, Blau writes that נָא is a particle "of entreaty and exhortation"

used with the cohortative and imperative; his single example, שִׁמְעוּ־נָא (Gen 37:6), he

renders as "Listen, I beseech you!"[13] Contrary to Bergsträsser, he traces the long

cohortative and long imperative to the Canaanite subjunctive **yaqtula*.[14]

Joüon-Muraoka considers the final aleph a *mater* and not etymological, possibly

serving to contrast with the נָה‏ of the feminine plural yiqtol and imperative.[15] Used with

cohortatives, נָא is "an affective particle" that can "reinforce" their volitive nature,[16] and it

"adds a nuance of prayer or request, sometimes of energy."[17] In some cases, however, it

"is used in a rather loose manner" and conveys only "a forceful nuance."[18] With the

(long) imperative, נָא is an "emotive particle" adding "greater emphasis" and a "weak

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[10] Bergsträsser, *Hebräische Grammatik*, vol. 2, §10g.

[11] Bergsträsser, *Hebräische Grammatik*, vol. 2, §10g.

[12] Bergsträsser, *Hebräische Grammatik*, vol. 2, §5h.

[13] Joshua Blau, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (2d, amended ed.; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1993), §64; cf. §3.4.1.

[14] Joshua Blau, *Phonology and Morphology of Biblical Hebrew* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2010), §4.3.3.3.4.

[15] JM §7b. Contrast this with the view of Moran, below.

[16] JM §45b, translating "(therefore)" in אָסֻרָה־נָּא (Exod 3:3); cf. §163a.

[17] JM §114b.

[18] JM §105c, where it is described as an "entreating interjection."

entreating nuance," translatable as "a stressed and lengthened *Please* in English," as "I beg (you)," as "For pity's sake!," or as an emphatic term (e.g., "Do come!" or "Go then!").[19] Little information is given on its use with the jussive, other than to note its common use with requests for permission.[20]

According to Waltke and O'Connor, נָא is an exclamatory/interjection particle to be translated "I pray."[21] However, twice when discussing Lambdin's view, they refrain from criticism and appear to be agnostic, if not outright approving,[22] so it is difficult to know their actual view on the topic. As for the origin of נָא, it may have come from the energic.[23]

Arnold and Choi find that the particle "evinces no discernible difference in meaning" and, after reviewing others' views, conclude that the particle can usually be left untranslated.[24]

Gibson finds "a mild precative nuance" in the particle and likewise insists that it can be left untranslated.[25]

Harman suggests that נָא "soften[s] the harshness" of an imperative and also

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[19] JM §105c. Note that נָא is *not* used with the infinitive absolute is the sense of "You shall/must do *x*," as the particle is associated with the "intimate or familiar speech" characterized by the imperative (§123v).

[20] JM §114h.

[21] *IBHS* §4.2.2a. Cf. §32.2.3d (a "particle of entreaty") and §40.2.5c (a "polite" exclamation).

[22] *IBHS* §34.7a; §40.2.5c.

[23] *IBHS* §34.7a. Cf. §31.7.2a; §40.2.5c.

[24] Bill T. Arnold and John H. Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), §3.3.2.

[25] J. C. L. Gibson, *Davidson's Introductory Hebrew Grammar: Syntax* (4th ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), §65.

admits Lambdin's view as a possibility.[26] The compound אִם־נָא is found in phrases "seeking a favorable hearing of a request."[27]

Published Studies

Gottlieb investigates the origin of נָא in Hebrew. He finds in Hebrew the remnants of the Canaanite longer energic *yaqtulanna*. Gottlieb cites orthographic evidence from Ugaritic, in which the energic suffixes *n*, *nn*, and *nh* are occasionally separated from the rest of the verb either with a word divider or by being written at the beginning of a new line, and concludes from this that the suffixes were beginning to be viewed as independent words. In Hebrew, the change was nearly total: the energic *n* remained on suffixed forms—first with the imperfect and imperative, and then, by analogy, with the perfect,[28] the infinitive, and nouns and particles—but otherwise it appears as the particle נָא (or נָּא, which preserves the original doubling).

The fact that נָא is used with commands, wishes, and expressions of encouragement in the Canaanite-influenced Akkadian of the Amarna letters, in Ugaritic, and in Hebrew leads Gottlieb to suggest that the particle serves not only "to 'intensify' an immediately preceding voluntative [his term for cohortative], jussive or imperative" but also as "an optative particle."[29]

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[26] Allan Harman, "Particles," *NIDOTTE* 4:1033. The question remains whether the two views are compatible.

[27] Harman, *NIDOTTE* 4:1033.

[28] Hans Gottlieb, "The Hebrew Particle *nâ*," *AcOr* 33 (1971): 47. Note that the pronominal suffixes with energic *n* in fact probably do not appear with the perfect; Deuteronomy 24:13, which is cited by both JM §61f (note) and Gesenius-Kautzsch (§58i) as the example, has the form וּבֵרֲכֶךָ—strictly a wəqaltí (and in pause no less; the energic suffixes are especially common in pause).

[29] Gottlieb, "Particle *nâ*," 53.

As will be discussed later, Gottlieb's etymology is probably correct (the *-â* of the cohortative and long imperative, on the other hand, more likely reflects not the energic but the **yaqtula*, which developed independently into the subjunctive in Arabic). His treatment of the function of נָא, on the other hand, is unsatisfying, as he devotes so much space to etymology that his discussion of semantics appears brief and almost tacked on.

The same year, Lambdin observed that the phenomenon of junctural doubling in biblical Hebrew (viz., doubling that occurs when a lexeme and a pre- or postposed lexical element are brought together) is manifested in the conjunctive dagesh. Like Gottlieb, he points to the frequent dagesh in נָּ־ following a cohortative. Following Moran's analysis of Byblian Canaanite,[30] however, Lambdin derives the cohortative from the subjunctive *yaqtula*. The final short vowel apocopated, resulting in a merger with *yaqtul* and *yaqtul* < **yaqtulu*.[31] In compensation for this mass paradigmatic leveling, speakers then restored the final *-a*: the energic *yaqtulanna* was still in use, and speakers analyzed it as *yaqtula* + *nā* (assuming thereby that *yaqtulanna* reflected junctural doubling). In this way, the form in *-a* was brought back.

Lambdin's derivation is not shared by some major current voices and is itself problematic. He claims that because final short vowels were lost in Hebrew, *yaqtula* must have ended with either a long or an anceps vowel. But he also suggests that *yaqtulanna* (ending in *-ă*) was analyzed by speakers as *yaqtula* + *nā*, which means that in at least one

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[30] Cf. William L. Moran, *Amarna Studies: Collected Writings* (ed. John Huehnergard and Shlomo Izre'el; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2003).

[31] As evidence, Lambdin notes the "single injunctive paradigm" resulting from multiple forms and the "improper" analogical use of the cohortative in first-person wayyiqtol forms (Thomas O. Lambdin, "The Junctural Origin of the West Semitic Definite Article," in *Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William Foxwell Albright* [ed. Hans Goedicke; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1971], 326).

instance a (presumably unstressed) final short vowel was in fact lengthened and hence retained. And the second-person masculine singular pronoun אַתָּה comes from proto-Semitic *ʾanta, which also ended in a (presumably unstressed) short vowel.[32]

More likely are the views of Blau,[33] Joüon-Muraoka,[34] and Pardee,[35] who hold that not only the cohortative but also the long imperative came from the *yaqtula* form (which developed into the subjunctive in Arabic but is not properly a subjunctive in Canaanite). Further, Blau notes that *a* tends to be preserved in Hebrew more often than *i* and *u*, giving reason to think that the final *-ă* in the *yaqtula* was retained and lengthened in the cohortative (and, one assumes, in the long imperative as well, though perhaps that form arose by analogy) under paradigmatic pressure due to its collapse with the jussive *yaqtul*.[36] Lambdin's proposal is therefore unlikely.

Kaufman notes the long-standing tradition, since rabbinic times, of translating נָא as "please": the rabbis' dictum, he says, was אין נא אלא לשון בקשה, "*Nāʾ* is always a term of petition."[37] He explicitly rejects the view of Lambdin and the Greek versions that the particle functions logically like "then, therefore, now then."[38] Kaufman bases his view on

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[32] Sabatino Moscati, ed., *An Introduction to the Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages: Phonology and Morphology* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1980), §13.8. In the first edition of his *Ugaritische Grammatik* (Münster: Ugarit Verlag, 2000), Josef Tropper proposed *ʾantă (§41.112.2); he changed this to *ʾanta (with short -ă) in the second edition (2012, §41.112.2)

[33] Blau, *Phonology and Morphology*, §4.3.3.3.4n.

[34] JM §116n.

[35] Dennis Pardee, review of Josef Tropper, *Ugaritische Grammatik*, *AfO* 50 (2003/2004): 216–17.

[36] Blau, *Phonology and Morphology*, §3.5.7.2.3n; §3.5.7.2.4. Cf. Pardee, review of Tropper, 121–22.

[37] Stephen A. Kaufman, "An Emphatic Plea for Please," *Maarav* 7 (1991): 195 n. 1.

[38] The reference is to Lambdin's *Introduction*, to *IBHS* §40.2.5c, and to an early draft of Steven E. Fassberg, *Studies in Biblical Syntax* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1944).

three considerations. First, "there simply are not enough examples of 'please' in Biblical

dialogue unless נָא is included."[39] Second, with the exception of the singular cohortative,

נָא appears only in utterances whose focus is the person addressed: the particle does not

occur when a request is made of a third person, even when a logical consequence is clear.

Third—and for Kaufman the most convincing—Lambdin misunderstood the origin of the

particle.

The verbal forms in *-(an)n(a)* based on the prefix conjugation are not "energic,"

Kaufman says, if by the term one means emphatic; on the contrary, these forms *soften*

requests, questions, and expressions of doubt. Further, the Hebrew cohortative derives not

from the "subjunctive" *yaqtula* but from the energic *yaqtulanna*, which was then split

into **yaqtulā + *nnā* and manifested as אֶקְטְלָה־נָּא, and therefore the meaning of the

cohortative is the same whether נָא is present or not.[40] Finally, the long imperative is itself

equivalent to the imperative with נָא, as shown both by its prevalence in addresses to

superiors (esp. petitions to God in the Psalms) and by the fact that it can take the *n*-form

of pronominal suffixes.

In response, Kaufman's first point begs the question. Politeness involves using

linguistic strategies to minimize a face-threatening act, and a specific lexeme

corresponding to "please" in English is only one possible strategy. In Hebrew, one

regularly sees the use of honorifics (אֲדֹנִי, אֲדֹנִי הַמֶּלֶךְ, etc.), deprecating self-reference

(עַבְדְּךָ, etc.), deferential third-person forms, interjections (בִּי), and expressions like אִם־נָא

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[39] Kaufman, "Please," 196.

[40] Kaufman claims that, with or without נָא, "the cohortative almost always means not 'let me' in the sense of 'I am resolved to . . .' but rather 'I think it may be a good idea to . . .'" ("Please," 198).

מָצָאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ—just to cite the most obvious examples. Hebrew would not lack for polite expressions if it did not have a *please*-lexeme.

Kaufman's second point is weighty, but his third point, like his first, is less so, for he may have misunderstood Lambdin's argument.[41] In fact, it is just possible he didn't even read Lambdin's argument, for he cites it only "as discussed by J. Huehnergard" in an article in *Hebrew Studies*.[42] Here is the relevant passage from Lambdin:

> The cohortative ending, as well as the so-called emphatic imperative in -*āh*, owes its survival . . . to the concurrent use of the energic form in -*anna*, as *yaqtulánna*, which, by virtue of the existence of junctural doubling, is reinterpretable as **yaqtula + nā*. By assuming a constant interplay between the two forms, we can understand the partial preservation of the *yaqtula* form as well as its association with the injunctive paradigm. This also provides us with the etymology of the particle *naʾ* [*sic*].[43]

Lambdin explains only the particle's etymology, not its semantics. His concern is to show how junctural doubling can explain certain morphological features. He says nothing here about either the meaning of the energic or the syntactical function of the *yaqtula*. It is not clear how Kaufman can claim that because Lambdin associates נָא with the energic and "the subjunctive" (in fact, Lambdin never uses this term), "one can see why Lambdin would have been troubled by the meaning 'please'. What has 'please' to do with the energic or the grammatical subordination of the subjunctive?"[44]

Kaufman's remaining arguments derive the meaning of נָא not from its use in actual passages but from its etymology—a dangerous undertaking. Barr's caution should

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41 As presented in Lambdin, "Junctural Origin."

42 Viz., J. Huehnergard, "The Early Hebrew Prefix-Conjugations," *HS* 29 (1988): 19–23 (esp. 23).

43 Lambdin, "Junctural Origin," 326.

44 Kaufman, "Please," 197.

be heeded:

> Etymology . . . is concerned with the derivation of words from previous forms. It must be emphasized that this is a historical study. It studies the past of a word, but understands that the past of a word is no infallible guide to its present meaning. Etymology is not, and does not profess to be, a guide to the semantic value of words in their current usage, and such value has to be determined from the current usage and not from the derivation.[45]

Like Kaufman, Wilt rejects Lambdin's view, calling it "far too vague" and unable to address anomalies.[46] First, נָא occurs in some utterances involving logical consequence but not in others.[47] Second, it occurs in utterances that have no apparent logical connection (and sometimes in utterances at the beginning of a pericope). Third, it appears in utterances with וְעַתָּה and therefore is redundant as an indicator of consequence. Fourth, it appears in request exchanges that already display a clear structure of circumstance–request–desired outcome and therefore must be redundant. And fifth, it is unevenly distributed throughout volitional-containing narrative passages of the OT.[48] Wilt also rejects explanations that the particle conveys emphasis (the concept is "slippery") or urgency (one then would expect it to occur frequently with verbs such as קום, מהר, and צוה).[49]

Instead, Wilt adopts a sociolinguistic approach based on Brown and Levinson's

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[45] James S. Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 107.

[46] Wilt, "Sociolinguistic Analysis," 237.

[47] But cf. Lambdin's insistence that because נָא is a modal particle, "its occurrence cannot be predicted" (*Introduction*, §136).

[48] "Volitional" is used in this thesis to refer to any of the injunctive forms: the jussive, imperative, or cohortative.

[49] Wilt, "Sociolinguistic Analysis," 239.

framework. He sees the use of נָא with a volitional as one strategy for providing redress in a face-threatening act. A volitional form without נָא, on the other hand, results in a bald, on-record FTA. Wilt examines nonnegated volitionals in the J and E texts of Genesis through Numbers and finds that the presence or absence of נָא significantly correlates with Brown and Levinson's P(H, S) variable—as in exchanges between a human and God or between a subject and a ruler.[50] When the power differential is not significant, or when individuals use נָא contrary to what the power differential would suggest (e.g., when God uses נָא with humans), speakers may use the term to offer redress (1) when attempting to strengthen or heal a relationship with the hearer or (2) when asking the hearer to behave in a way contrary to the normal obligations of the relationship. נָא is rarely used (again, contrary to power-differential expectations) in bargaining situations or in inclusive cohortatives (since these are inherently redressive). In light of these factors, Wilt concludes that "the claim that [נָא] often cannot be translated seems shaky: 'please' would probably be an appropriate rendering in most, if not all, of the occurrences that we have considered."[51]

Wilt's is the first published European article to attempt to determine the meaning of נָא based on its actual usage. He has done careful work paying attention to both the use and the nonuse of נָא, but his conclusion does not show "that Gesenius's explanation was closer to the mark than those of more recent grammars." Specifically, he makes

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[50] In 10 of 27 exchanges, however, heads of household use נָא when addressing their domestic inferiors (Wilt, "Sociolinguistic Analysis," 246 n. 23). Additionally, God himself uses נָא when addressing humans in 7 of 70 exchanges (245 n. 19)—a full 10%!

[51] Wilt, "Sociolinguistic Analysis," 252. The decisive question is whether "please" functions in English in the two ways Wilt notes.

surprisingly little allowance for the "mannigfalten Färbungen der Rede" Gesenius

attributed to the particle, such as "Verstärkung einer scheltend und drohend . . . oder

spöttisch . . . ausgesprochenen Aufforderung"—not just politeness.[52] Furthermore, his

reliance upon chi-square probability calculations is questionable: by his own admission,

$p < .05$ demonstrates only that the use or nonuse of נָא in a given utterance is intentional.[53]

How this supports his conclusion that נָא is a marker of politeness is unclear.

In her analysis of נָא in the Torah and Former Prophets, Shulman concludes that

"נָא has a single function in all its occurrences: to mark an utterance as a polite and

personal request."[54] She proceeds syntactically, first observing that third-person jussives

without נָא always have as their agent a party other than the addressee; with נָא, the agent

is always the addressee.[55] Shulman concludes from this that speakers use the jussive

without נָא either to make a request of a third party or to express a general wish; they use

נָא to make a polite request of the hearer. Similarly, speakers use אַל with the third-person

jussive when they desire that a third party not act, or wish that an action not take place;

they use אַל־נָא to ask the addressee either not to act against them or to prevent an action

from taking place. The negated second-person jussive is a prohibitory command, and

speakers use אַל־נָא to issue a polite prohibitory request.[56]

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[52] Wilt, "Sociolinguistic Analysis," 237; E. Kautzsch, ed., *Wilhelm Gesenius' Hebräische Grammatik* (28th rev. ed.; Leipzig: Vogel, 1909), §105b n. 1.; §110d.

[53] Wilt, "Sociolinguistic Analysis," 243.

[54] Ahouva Shulman, "The Particle נָא in Biblical Hebrew Prose," *HS* 40 (1999): 81.

[55] The same observation is made by Kaufman, "Please," 196.

[56] However, a socially inferior speaker may address a superior using bare אַל when making a request or a suggestion for a third party's benefit.

Moving to the imperative, Shulman finds that נָא signals a polite request (as opposed to an order or forceful command, which dispenses with נָא). Such a request often is for the speaker's own benefit, putting the speaker in the hearer's debt, and thus נָא provides redress.[57]

Its use with the cohortative is more complex. The bare cohortative expresses the speaker's desire or intent to act. Generally, נָא is added to politely propose that a superior approve a desired or intended action: "Allow me to," "Let me" (in 17 passages). When the speaker and hearer are of equal social ranking (in 10 passages), the particle solicits the agreement and cooperation of the hearer in an undemanding way. And when the speaker is superior (2 passages, contra Shulman),[58] the particle indicates the need for the addressee to pay attention. In soliloquies (2 occurrences, contra Shulman), נָא occurs in contexts in which speakers are contemplating a plan of action, perhaps trying to convince themselves of a course of action with a "Let me" or "It may be good idea to," as opposed to a נָא-less "I intend / am resolved to." Of the ten *plural* cohortatives with נָא, only two are inclusive; the remaining eight are exclusive. Shulman suggests that this is because inclusive cohortatives tend to be suggestions or invitations to action, rather than actual requests, making נָא unnecessary.

נָא is found in other constructions as well (with אִם, הִנֵּה, יֵשׁ, and one wəqataltí and

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[57] Shulman notes that out of 152 occurrences, 70 involve a speaker addressing a socially inferior with the imperative and נָא; 55 indicate a request, promise, or blessing. But she is unable to discern the function of the particle in the remaining 15 occurrences. Interestingly, according to her statistics, equals address each other with the imperative and נָא 46 times, and an inferior addresses a superior only 36.

[58] Shulman counts only 2 Kgs 7:12 and considers Gen 18:21 a soliloquy. But in the latter, Yhwh's soliloquy ends with 18:19 (v. 20 begins with the wayyiqtol וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה), and Abraham's question in verse 23 (הַאַף תִּסְפֶּה צַדִּיק עִם־רָשָׁע; note especially the introductory הַאַף) makes little sense if he isn't aware of the content of vv. 20–21.

two passive verbs), always in the context of a request or favor. Shulman does not state directly that the sense is polite in such passages.

Shulman's analysis is detailed, and her conclusions are supported by discussion of numerous examples. This is one of the few articles that support their findings with careful discussion of actual passages, with attention paid to the social standing of the participants in a conversation. Nevertheless, one may raise two questions. First, Shulman regularly speaks of נָא being used with humble requests, deference, politeness, and requesting personal favors, but often there is no reason to see humility, personal interest, or deference other than the presence of נָא, and thus her argumentation verges on being circular.[59] Second, although her treatment of the third-person jussive with נָא is convincing (except for her claim that נָא indicates deference, humility, or personal benefit), her discussion of the cohortative is unconvincing: one cannot claim that "נָא following the cohortative marks the utterance as a polite request for the addressee's permission" and then, in a discussion of numerous examples, provide a translation that uses politeness language only once!

Examining the imperative, Jenni notes first that the imperative is not solely a command form. It has a much wider illocutionary force, used to express commands, instructions, suggestions, cautions, permission, and encouragement. Thus, we should not assume that the imperative is an impolite or forceful form to begin with. But as far as commands go, Jenni suggests three forms of politeness: (1) the short imperative with appropriate intonation, (2) the long imperative, and (3) the short or the long imperative

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[59] For example, Shulman nowhere defines what she means by "polite." And she appears to assume (based on the presence of נָא), rather than argue, that Aaron's request of Moses in Num 12:12 is made "humbly" (64) and that Balak's request of Balaam in Num 22:16 comprises "a personal favor" (66).

with נָא. Since sentence intonation is a prosodic feature not preserved in the Masoretic orthography, the first option is now inaccessible. As for the second option, Jenni notes Kaufman's claim that the long imperative expresses a softened demand or polite request, but Jenni objects that (a) the short form can express a request too, (b) in the end, current usage—not etymology—is decisive, and (c) in the Psalms God is addressed with *short* imperatives often enough to doubt Kaufman's largely *prima facie* argument. He rejects Waltke and O'Connor's claim that the presence of both short and long imperatives "in similar contexts" defies differentiation.[60] On the contrary, given two forms, we must adopt the working hypothesis "dass eine solche Differenz nicht in der Sprache existierte, wenn sie nicht eine bestimmte Aufgabe hätte."[61]

Based on a study of the imperatives in the Torah and Former Prophets, Jenni concludes that the long imperative functions as a request that is only conditionally granted and expresses politeness by respecting the addressee's freedom: it provides redress to the hearer because it is an acknowledgment that the requested action will or can be performed only if the addressee is so inclined. The inclusion of "please" or "bitte" when translating is thus possible but not required (in English and German, "please/bitte" is not the only way to respect an addressee's freedom to decide). Thus, Kaufman's view must be nuanced: in the Psalms, the petitioner uses the long imperative to acknowledge that God might not answer his request. The short imperative, on the other hand, is appropriate when the petitioner knows that God, given his nature and will, is sure to

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[60] Cf. *IBHS* §34.4a.

[61] Ernst Jenni, "Höfliche Bitte im Alten Testament," in *Congress Volume: Basel, 2001* (ed. A. Lemaire; VTSup 92; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 8.

accede to his petition.[62]

Similarly, with נָא a speaker anticipates and shapes the (initially negative) reaction

of the addressee to a direct request. It is a modal or softening particle best translated—if

at all—with "doch."[63] Jenni renders Yhwh's well-known קַח־נָא in Gen. 22:2 as "Nimm

doch deinen Sohn (auch wenn du Bedenken hast) . . . und opfere ihn" and notes that the

polite, long form (קְחָה, "nimm bitte!") would be entirely out of place here.[64] If a speaker

wishes *both* to acknowledge the freedom of the addressee to approve or reject *and* to

mitigate any initial hesitation, the long form with נָא comes into play: thus Delilah pleads

with Samson, הַגִּידָה־נָּא, "sage mir doch bitte" (Judg 16:6, 10).

Jenni rightly calls attention to the fact that the imperative is not merely a

command form, and he is correct to note that any discussion of the meaning of נָא cannot

rely on etymology. However, while it is likely that the short and long imperatives coexist

because each serves "eine bestimmte Aufgabe,"[65] an *Aufgabe* may be to express

politeness, or it may be to add a syllable for metrical or rhetorical purposes—there are

Aufgaben, and then there are *Aufgaben*.

In addition, some of Jenni's interpretations are unconvincing. For example, when

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[62] As Jenni notes (11), analysis is complicated by the presence of imperatives with pronominal suffixes and of imperatives of roots with weak final consonants, neither of which has a distinct long form. Nor does the pragmatic distinction appear to hold in Psalm 119; Jenni suggests this is because the psalm is not a typical petition but rather a didactic product from the pen of a theologian who trusts implicitly in God.

[63] Jenni, "Höfliche Bitte," 13. English does not have a lexical counterpart to *doch*, and Jenni's example, "Komm *doch* zum Umtrunk," must be translated with pragmatic implicature strategies: "Why don't you come to the reception?," "How about coming to the reception?," "Hey, come to the reception!"

[64] Jenni, "Höfliche Bitte," 14. In Gen 15:9, on the other hand, the situation is reversed: in preparing for the ratification of the covenant with Abram, Yhwh uses the (long) imperative to tell Abram to take a three-year-old calf, for at this point Abram is still his own man and able to say no (14 n. 27).

[65] Jenni, "Höfliche Bitte," 8.

Delilah tells (scolds? chides?) Samson that he has mocked and lied to her twice already (and doesn't really love her), and then asks (tells? nags?) him to reveal to her how he can be subdued (הַגִּידָה לִּי, Judg 16:13), is she really using the long imperative to acknowledge that she respects his freedom to choose whether to comply? A similar problem holds with the use of the long imperative in 2 Kgs 1:9, 11, where two army commanders convey to Elijah the king's order to come along (רְדָה) and then are destroyed by fire from heaven. Whatever the difference in meaning between the long and short imperatives, politeness appears not to be involved.

David examines the use of the cohortative in the books of the Torah and Nebi'im. Instead of analyzing the cohortative by itself, he looks at how indirect cohortatives differ in function from direct cohortatives.[66] In the 32 cases of the cohortative with נָא, he finds that the particle never occurs with (1) cohortatives in primary position preceded by an imperative, (2) cohortatives in secondary position, regardless of what type of syntactical phrase proceeds,[67] or (3) indirect cohortatives. Twenty-seven of the instances (85%) involve a response given by the addressee in the discourse, even if only implicitly.[68] From this, David concludes that the construction is to be translated as "je veux pouvoir [faire]," as it constitutes a request from a speaker—or those he represents—who

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[66] Robert David, "L'analyse syntaxique, outil pour la traduction biblique: Le cas des cohortatifs," in *Traduire la Bible Hébraïque* (ed. Robert David and Manuel Jinbachian; Montreal: Médiaspaul, 2005), 278 n. 12.

[67] "Quel que soit le type de proposition qui précède (classe a.2)"; disappointingly, David nowhere explains what constitutes class a.2 ("L'analyse syntaxique," 281).

[68] In fact, Gen 18:21 does involve a response from Abraham (as stated above, the passage probably is not a soliloquy), 2 Sam 24:14 may imply a response from Gad (or, more likely, Yhwh), 1 Kgs 20:31 implies a response from the soldiers (at least by engaging in the suggested activity; cf. Josh 22:26), and Isa 5:1, 5 are poetry (and perhaps still implicitly invite a response from the reader/listener). That said, David includes Exod 3:3 in the 27 instances that receive a response, which is not self-evident.

possesses the desire to do (*le vouloir-faire*) a given action but requires the approval of the hearer, who possesses (or is thought to possess) the authority to grant him the ability to carry out (*le pouvoir-faire*) that action.[69] In contrast, the direct cohortative *without* an immediately following indirect cohortative is to be translated as "je dois faire"; the direct cohortative *with* an immediately following indirect cohortative is to be translated as "je veux faire"; and the indirect cohortative itself is part of an ecbatic or telic ("afin que") clause.[70]

Like Shulman, David is on to something, and his interpretation of the cohortative yields more convincing readings than Shulman's. Indirect volitional forms do function differently from direct ones—they do not express the desire of the speaker—and therefore can be excluded from study.[71] But although he forgoes politeness language, "je veux pouvoir faire" is a politeness strategy: it can redress positive face by acknowledging that the hearer's opinion is sought and valued, and it can redress negative face by granting the hearer the option of expressing disapproval should the speaker's intent be felt to encroach upon the hearer's own freedom.

Most recently, Christiansen considers Shulman's study. Crucially, Shulman's claim that נָא expresses a polite request is belied by how she treats the three soliloquy-cohortatives in her corpus: "Shulman's own glosses . . . of the passages in question betray the fact that the meaning cannot simply be 'please,' as 'please' is conspicuously absent from them." This leads him to conclude that although נָא is a particle of politeness with

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[69] David, "L'analyse syntaxique," 282.

[70] David, "L'analyse syntaxique," 282–83.

[71] Cf. JM §116; *IBHS* §§34.5.2, 34.6.

the imperative, it functions with the jussive and cohortative as a sentence-level, modal exhortative or "propositive" particle—that is, its use indicates "that the speaker is *proposing* an action with which the addressee may or may not agree or choose to accommodate."[72] Korean has just such a particle, Christiansen notes, whereas English relies on other constructions ("Let's," "Would you like to?" "Wouldn't it be nice to?").

Christiansen provides support for his view. Like the sentence-level interrogative particle הֲ־, נָא appears "near sentence-initial position" when combined with הִנֵּה and אִם.[73] Further, it occurs in recursive constructions (those involving the embedding of one clause within another and the presence of the same particle in both) and recursion is a higher-level syntactic feature. As an example he cites Genesis 19:2, הִנֶּה נָא־אֲדֹנַי סוּרוּ נָא אֶל־בֵּית עַבְדְּכֶם, which he analyzes as follows:

Sentence-level נָא in the main clause signaling
a propositive (not declarative, interrogative, etc.) sentence

הִנֶּה נָא־אֲדֹנַי סוּרוּ נָא אֶל־בֵּית עַבְדְכֶם

Clause-level נָא signaling a propositive
(not declarative, interrogative, etc.) clause

Additionally, if נָא is not to be considered a modal propositive particle, one is left with few alternatives for expressing an entreaty: כִּי־יֵיטַב אֶל־ (and related expressions), אִם טוֹב בְּעֵינֶיךָ, and בִּי אֲדֹנִי/אֲדֹנַי are simply too rare (and too formulaic to be considered productive). נָא could be added to this list as a (productive) particle whose propositive nature provides negative-politeness redress for an FTA: "The implicature of the

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[72] Bent Christiansen, "A Linguistic Analysis of the Biblical Hebrew Particle *nā'*: A Test Case," *VT* 59 (2009): 385.

[73] Christiansen, "Linguistic Analysis," 387.

propositive particle is that the addressee may choose whether to comply with the request, since it is only a proposal and not a direct command."[74]

Christiansen is correct that נָא is not simply a politeness particle and that its function with the cohortative and jussive differs from its function with the imperative. And it will be seen that the force of נָא with one verb can carry through to the remaining verbs in a sequence, which adds credibility to his suggestion that it is a sentence-level particle. However, his statement that "Biblical Hebrew propositive sentences can apparently be either marked or unmarked with the propositive particle *nā*'" prompts the question, What other propositive markers are there? Nevertheless, the interpretation this paper adopts is very similar to Christiansen's.

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[74] Christiansen, "Linguistic Analysis," 392. It is not clear whether this statement also applies to the use of נָא with the imperative.

CHAPTER 3

THE ETYMOLOGY OF נָא

Two primary historical sources for at least the -n- suffix can be considered; the -ʾ that

follows presents more of a challenge.

Semitic *_yaqtulu_ and _nun paragogicum_

Based on comparative evidence from Arabic, Byblian Canaanite,[1] and (to a lesser extent)

Aramaic and Ugaritic, the Western and Southern Semitic *yaqtulu* conjugation had the

endings *-ūna in the 2/3mp and *-īna in the 2fs.[2] In Aramaic, as in Hebrew and

Phoenician,[3] the final short *-a dropped, leaving *y/tiqtəlūn* in the 2/3mp.[4] At some time in

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[1] William L. Moran, "A Syntactical Study of the Dialect of Byblos as Reflected in the Amarna Tablets," in *Amarna Studies: Collected Writings* (ed. John Huehnergard and Shlomo Izre'el; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns), 41–46.

[2] Since the dual is not preserved in Biblical Hebrew, it is not considered here.

[3] In Hebrew and in Phoenician, probably during the early first millennium. See Angel Sáenz-Badillos, *A History of the Hebrew Language* (trans. John Elwolde; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 45–46; Johannes Friedrich and Wolfgang Röllig, *Phönizisch-Punische Grammatik* (3d ed., rev. Maria Giulia Amadasi Guzzo and Werner R. Mayer; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1999), §72.1.

[4] The 2fs is unattested in either the inscriptions of the tenth to eighth centuries (Rainer Degen, *Altaramäische Grammatik der Inschriften des 10.–8. Jh. v. Chr.* [Wiesbaden: Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft, 1969]) or Biblical Aramaic (Franz Rosenthal, *A Grammar of Biblical Aramaic* [7th, exp. ed.; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006]); however, it is attested in the Egyptian papyri (T. Muraoka and B. Porten, *A Grammar of Egyptian Aramaic* [Leiden: Brill, 1998], §37d).
Sabatino Moscati claims that the ending *-ūn* is also attested once in a 2mp impv. form (*An Introduction to the Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages: Phonology and Morphology* [Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1980], §16.67), but Degen states that the *-n* is an editor's reconstruction that is no longer accepted (*Altaramäische Grammatik*, §51).

both Hebrew and Phoenician, the *-n* dropped as well,[5] resulting in complete identity of

the corresponding forms in the *yaqtulu*, jussive, and preterit.[6]

But the loss of *-*n* was not total. In the Masoretic tradition of the Hebrew Bible,

for example, the nasal is preserved in 310 instances,[7] some of which (e.g., יִכְרְעוּן, Job

31:10) almost certainly appear to be jussives, not yiqtols.[8] Whether this so-called *nun*

paragogicum, which is limited to the 2fs and 2/3mp forms (just like the original *-*ūna*/-

īna endings), indicates a more formal register, has metrical value, is more emphatic, or is

merely a stylistic variant is irrelevant here.[9] Noteworthy are (1) that *-*na* was a standard

ending on the *yaqtulu, distinguishing it from the jussive, and (2) that in Biblical Hebrew

it never appears suffixed to yiqtols, plural cohortatives, or jussives negated by אַל (and

only exceptionally on unnegated jussives).[10]

Hebrew נָא preserves not only *-*n*- but also an original final *-*a*. If the particle

shares a common origin with *nun paragogicum*, the *-*na* must have broken off together

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[5] Friedrich and Röllig, *Phönizisch-Punische Grammatik*, §135.

[6] Not unreasonably, Joshua Blau suggests that the loss of the final short vowel in the *yaqtulu resulted in enough identical forms between the imperfect and the jussive that "the feeling for the modal differences became blurred," resulting in the further loss of the now-final -*n* in the 2fs and 2/3mp (*Phonology and Morphology of Biblical Hebrew* [Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2010], §4.3.3.2.4).

[7] W. Randall Garr, "The Paragogic *nun* in Rhetorical Perspective," in *Biblical Hebrew in Its Northwest Semitic Setting: Typological and Historical Perspectives* (ed. Steven E. Fassberg and Avi Hurvitz; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 65. JM §44e claims 305 instances but in a note cites another work that claims 321; Anson F. Rainey claims 304 instances (Review of J. Hoftijzer, *The Function and Use of the Imperfect Forms with Nun Paragogicum in Classical Hebrew*, *HS* 31 [1990]: 173).

[8] See Rudolf Meyer, *Hebräische Grammatik* (3d ed.: 1969–82; one-volume repr., Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1992), vol. 2, §63.5.a; and JM §44e.

[9] Garr sees discourse factors at work: when paired with regular *yiqtol* forms, the verb with *nun paragogicum* always exists in a clause that "functions as a rhetorical satellite" to—subordinate to or dependent upon—the clause containing the regular *yiqtol* form ("Paragogic *nun*," esp. 73–74). Garr's analysis of some examples seems forced, and at any rate one must marvel at the number of rhetorically dependent/subordinate clauses that lack a verb with *nun paragogicum*.

[10] Garr, "Paragogic *nun*," 67; JM §44e.

and very early, before the apocope of short vowels and subsequent loss of the nasal. But what led *-na to separate in some instances and yet remain to become -n in 310 others? Moreover, it seems highly unlikely that a form tied from the beginning to 2fs and 2/3mp *yaqtulu forms should come to be used exclusively with the volitional conjugations in all persons. Another explanation should be sought.

The Energic

An -n- is attested in another verbal form in Arabic, Ugaritic, Amarna Canaanite, and (to a lesser degree) Hebrew: the energic.

The Evidence from Ugaritic

Verbs in Ugaritic sometimes end in -n, -nh, -nn (occasionally written with a word divider, <yqtl.nn>), and even -nnn (again, occasionally with a word divider, <yqtln.nn>).[11] By analogy with Arabic, these endings are believed to represent the energic. The consonantal script hinders attempts at discovering whether the endings represent one, two, or even three distinct energic forms. Two reasons exist to doubt the existence of only one form. First, Arabic attests two energic moods, *yaktubanna* and *yaktuban*.[12] Secondly, based on context, both <yqtln> and <yqtlnh> can represent forms suffixed with the third-person singular pronoun: the preservation of h (/hu/ if masculine, /ha/ if feminine) in the latter

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[11] E. Verreet, *Modi Ugaritici: Eine morpho-syntaktische Abhandlung über das Modalsystem im Ugaritischen* (Leuven: Peeters, 1988), §1.2.5; Josef Tropper, *Ugaritische Grammatik* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2000), §73.6; Pierre Bordreuil and Dennis Pardee, *A Manual of Ugaritic* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2009), §4.1.1.5.1.2. Note, however, that 2003 Pardee pointed out that -nnn occurred "in poorly preserved passages where the first {n} could be part of the plural morpheme rather than part of the suffix" (Review of J. Tropper, *Ugaritische Grammatik*, *AfO* 50 [2003/2004]: 131 n. 483).

[12] Cf. J. A. Haywood and H. M. Nahmad, *A New Arabic Grammar of the Written Language* (2d ed.; London: Lund Humphries, 1965), 129; this grammar covers modern and sixth-century (Qur'anic) Arabic but does not discuss earlier forms of the language.

suggests the presence of a preceding vowel, and the absence of *h* in the former indicates

elision due to the lack of a vowel. One can therefore posit at least two forms of the

energic, /*yaqtulVn*/ and /*yaqtulVnnV*/, and thereby account for the distinct suffixed forms

(e.g., /*yaqtulVnnu*/ from */*yaqtulVn-hu*/, and /*yaqtulVnnVhu*/). Due to the identical

consonantal spellings, the longer energic form can be distinguished only when an object

suffix is affixed.[13]

And what of the forms in -*nn* and (possibly) -*nnn*? These are likely vocalized /-

VnnVnnV/ and /-*VnnVnnVnnV*/ respectively (based on Arabic, the vowel may be *a*, but

this is problematic for reasons to be discussed),[14] so that the claims of both Tropper and

Verreet of an energic /-*nin*/ related to the Akkadian ventive are unlikely.[15] Pardee's

hypothesis of recurrent "clipping" seems reasonable enough: energic /*yaqtulVnnu*/ (from

*/*yaqtulVnhu*/) was reanalyzed as a (nonenergic) *yaqtul* with the 3ms object suffix -*Vnnu*.

This new object suffix then was affixed to a long energic /*yaqtulVnnV*/, yielding

/*yaqtulVnnVnnu*/ (hence the spelling <yqtlnn>). In turn, this form was reanalyzed as a

(nonenergic) *yaqtul* with the 3ms object suffix -*VnnVnnu*, and the new suffix could be

attached to an energic (or plural nonenergic) form to yield something written <yqtlnnn>

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[13] Pardee, Review of Tropper, 246; Cyrus Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook* (1964; rev. repr, Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1998), §9.11. Stanislav Segert's observation that if two forms of the energic did exist, then the script does not distinguish between them, is thus technically incorrect (*A Basic Grammar of the Ugaritic Language* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984], §64.34).

[14] Cf. Daniel Sivan, *A Grammar of the Ugaritic Language* (2d, corr. impression; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001), 53; Bordreuil and Pardee, *Manual of Ugaritic*, §4.1.1.5.1.2. Sivan is unsure of gemination in the initial /-*Vnna*-/ and suggests that if Hebrew נָא represents euphonic gemination, then the Northwest Semitic energic morpheme had only one *n* (p. 106); however, the preservation of a preceding short vowel seems to require the geminated nasal, to close an unaccented syllable.

[15] Tropper, *Ugaritische Grammatik*, §73.62; idem, *Ugaritisch: Kurzgefasste Grammatik mit Übungstexten und Glossar* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2002), §73.43; Verreet, *Modi Ugaritici*, §20.3. Pardee points out that the connection of *m* in the ventive and *n* in the energic is simply implausible (Review of Tropper, 246).

or <yqtln.nn>.[16] At any rate, the linguistic evidence can be accounted for with just two

energic forms.

A number of questions arise. First, are the Ugaritic energics actual moods, as in

Arabic,[17] or are they suffixes that freely attach to other moods (since energic forms in

Ugaritic appear to involve indicatives, jussives, subjunctives, imperatives, and narratival

infinitives)?[18] Tropper's answer is yes. The energic is indeed a true mood, in that it

represents a subjective position taken by the speaker in regard to a state of affairs,[19] and it

also comprises a set of cran-morphs (he considers them allomorphs), existing only when

attached to the other verbal conjugations: the category of energic "ist vielmehr mit den

diversen verbalen Konjugationsmustern des Ug. kombinierbar, und zwar sowohl mit

indikativisch wie auch mit volitivisch ausgerichteten [Konjugationsmustern], indem sie

als Endung an diese treten kann."[20] Pardee vacillates on this question, favoring the

evidence from Arabic for genuine moods on the one hand but also admitting that

Tropper's view "appears . . . to explain best the existence of perfective, imperfective, and

volitive forms all bearing the {-n}."[21] If this is true, the energic may have arisen from the

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[16] Dennis Pardee, "Three Ugaritic Tablet Joins," *JNES* 43 (1984): 244–45 n. 14; Bordreuil and Pardee, *Manual of Ugaritic*, §4.1.1.5.1.2.

[17] Haywood and Nahmad, *New Arabic Grammar*, 129–30. This also appears to be the view held by Segert (*Basic Grammar*, §54.23), though his positions often are tentative.

[18] The narratival infinitive in question is <yraun> (KTU 1.5:II.6), which might be a yaqtulu energic: /yîraʾunnu/ (Sivan, *Grammar*, 102).

[19] Tropper, *Ugaritische Grammatik,* §77.1.

[20] Tropper, *Ugaritische Grammatik*, §77.411. Tropper's claim that the energic exists as three allomorphs would be more credible if it weren't for the fact that his parsing of a form as energic I, II, or III is in many cases arbitrary, and it is not clear what really conditions the distribution of the morphemes (see Pardee, Review of Tropper, p. 245). Both Eva von Dassow ("What the Canaanite Cuneiformists Wrote," *IEJ* 53 [2003]: 213–14) and Anson F. Rainey ("A New Grammar of Ugaritic" [review of Stanislav Segert, *A Basic Grammar of Ugaritic*], *Or* 56 [1987]: 399) express a similar view.

[21] Pardee, Review of Tropper, 247–50; quotation comes from 248. This raises a second question

use of an enclitic -n in early West Semitic.[22]

Second, what meaning do the energics convey? Do they grammaticalize emphasis, as in Arabic?[23] Verreet sees a connection with the Akkadian ventive (a doubtful connection for phonological reasons)[24] in that the ventive, with its focus on the speaker, has a certain emphasis, and he suggests that the energic indicates stress or climax "by raising the intensity, the implicit meaning, of a passage to emphasize its content."[25] But in light of the number of energics found in parallel constructions with nonenergics, this conclusion is simply overstated—for poetry, at least. In fact, Tropper comes to a different conclusion for precisely this reason. True, he says, the energic morpheme expresses the modal nuance of emphasis, but this emphasis varies from instance to instance,[26] and in poetic texts that set energic forms parallel to nonenergics, the energic must be assumed to *not* convey strong emphasis.[27] (Similarly, Greenstein holds that the energic form in parallel constructions may serve a prosodic function.)[28] And when an object suffix is

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of whether the energic endings -n and -nna were preceded by a fixed vowel (cf. Arabic -an, -anna) or were simply attached to the verb, with an epenthetic vowel added when the verb ended with a consonant. See pp. 247–48 for Pardee's concern regarding identical forms that would result (e.g., imperfective plural *yaqtulūna* = jussive-energic plural *yaqtulūna*); then again, many languages tolerate identical forms with differing syntactical functions.

[22] Pardee, Review of Tropper, 247.

[23] Haywood and Nahmad note that the energic is especially common in Qur'anic exhortations (*New Arabic Grammar*, 129–30).

[24] Pardee, Review of Tropper, 246.

[25] "Indem er die Intensität, die Prägnanz einer Stelle zur Betonung ihres Inhalts erhöht" (Verreet, *Modi Ugaritici*, §7.8, p. 98; see also §20.3, esp. p. 255).

[26] Tropper, *Ugaritische Grammatik*, §77.411.

[27] "Aufgrund der weiten Verbreitung dieses Phänomens ist davon auszugehen, daß das Energikusmorphem dabei keine starke Betonung zum Ausdruck bringt" (Tropper, *Ugaritische Grammatik*, §77.412).

[28] Edward L. Greenstein, "Forms and Functions of the Finite Verb in Ugaritic Narrative Verse," in *Biblical Hebrew in Its Northwest Semitic Setting* (ed. Steven E. Fassberg and Avi Hurvitz; Winona Lake,

attached, there may be no difference in meaning whatever.[29] These could be fixed forms, with no special meaning from the energic morpheme.

<div align="center">The Evidence from Amarna Canaanite</div>

In his doctoral thesis of 1950, Moran studied sixty-six letters written from the Canaanite city of Byblos that were found at Tell el-Amarna. The letters, written over a period of about thirty years, preserve Canaanite forms in vocalized cuneiform script and therefore are valuable witnesses to the Northwest Semitic language of the scribes. On the other hand, the Canaanite forms are part of the Akkadian in which the letters are written, which leaves scholars in the situation of having to learn early Canaanite based on bad Akkadian.

According to Moran, the enclitic *-na* was attached to indicative, imperative, and *yaqtula* (but not jussive *yaqtul*) volitive forms "to give emphasis."[30] This suggests one can speak of an indicative energic (*yaqtuluna*), an imperative energic (*qutulna*), and a *yaqtula*-energic (*yaqtulana*).[31] Moran equivocates, however, for he writes, "For a more detailed study of its [i.e., the particle *-na*'s] usage, see the study of the Energic,"[32] but then insists that "the form of the energic . . . is consistently *yaqtuluna*," suggesting now that the energic is a verb form ending in (rather than suffixed with) *-na*.[33] Then, a few pages later, he writes of a subjunctive energic form, *timaḫ(ḫ)aṣananī*, in one of the

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Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 86–90.

[29] Tropper, *Ugaritische Grammatik*, §77.411.

[30] Moran, *Amarna Studies*, 11–12. Moran makes the same claim for Ugaritic.

[31] Actually, in Northwest Semitic one would expect gemination in order to preserve the short vowel—*yaqtulunna* in the indicative and *yaqtulanna* in the *yaqtula*—but Moran makes no case for the doubling of the nasal.

[32] Moran, *Amarna Studies*, 12.

[33] Moran, *Amarna Studies*, 50.

Byblian letters. Von Dassow and Tropper therefore probably are correct when they claim that Moran ultimately holds to two energics: one *yaqtuluna* and the other *yaqtulana*.[34]

The energic forms are found in both main and subordinate (temporal, substantival, conditional, and relative) clauses, and more than half (22 of 38 instances) occur in interrogative sentences. Moran observes that "most of the questions are either dubitative . . . or querulous" and sees in them the clearest example of the energic as an emphatic form whose nuance varies by context.[35]

Rainey also posits two separate moods, each with an energic:

<u>INDICATIVE</u>		<u>INJUNCTIVE</u>	
Preterite	*yaqtul, û*	Jussive	*yaqtul, -û*
Imperfect	*yaqtulu, -ûna*	Volitive	*yaqtula, -û*
Energic	*yaqtulun(n)a*	Energic	*yaqtulan(n)a*[36]

Like Moran, Rainey sees the energic as "an optional means for strengthening the force of the verb."[37] This is evident from the energic's use (especially in questions, as noted by Moran) to enhance the sender's sense of helplessness, frustration, or heightened uncertainty in a situation. In other instances, it expresses an asseveration (cf. constructions like מוֹת תָּמוּת in Hebrew, though Rainey himself does not make the

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[34] Von Dassow, "Canaanite Cuneiformists," 214n30; Tropper, *Ugaritisch* §73.41.

[35] Moran, *Amarna Studies*, 50–51.

[36] Anson F. Rainey, "The Ancient Hebrew Prefix Conjugation in the Light of Amarnah Canaanite," *HS* 27 (1986): 4.

[37] Anson F. Rainey, *Morphosyntactic Analysis of the Verbal System* (vol. 2 of *Canaanite in the Amarna Tablets: A Linguistic Analysis of the Mixed Dialect Used by Scribes from Canaan*; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 235.

comparison).[38]

Rainey's two-mood, six-conjugation system is not without its critics. (Even Rainey himself subsequently denied the presence of a volitive *yaqtula* in Amarna Canaanite, claiming that all such forms are in fact ventives.[39] Tropper agrees but insists that the first-person forms are *yaqtula*s of exhortation.)[40] Von Dassow objects to having two identical conjugations for the preterit and jussive, preferring instead to have "a single form in two functions . . .; which of the two functions a particular verb form performed was determined through syntax and context."[41] But although the preterit and jussive are identical in form, they function differently within Rainey's two-mode system: Rainey classifies by *function* first and by *form* second, so this objection is not weighty. Von Dassow also criticizes Rainey for including the volitive and jussive as separate paradigms, claiming that the volitive is essentially a jussive with emphatic -*a*.[42] Similarly, she states that "it is more logically efficient" simply to posit an energic suffix that could be added to other forms. But the minds of language users are not necessarily logical, and theoretical syntax aims to reproduce the categories and constructs of the mind.

Pardee's review of Rainey is less a critique and more a thinking-aloud about the

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[38] Rainey, *Morphosyntactic Analysis*, 236–44.

[39] Anson F. Rainey, "Is There Really a *yaqtula* Conjugation Pattern in the Canaanite Amarna Tablets?" *JCS* 43/45 (1991–93): 115.

[40] Josef Tropper, "Ventiv oder *yaqtula*-Volitiv in den Amarnabriefen aus Syrien-Palästina?" in Ana sadî labnani lu allik*: Beiträge zu altorientalischen und mittelmeerischen Kulturen* (ed. Beate Pongratz-Leisten, Hartmut Kühne, and Paolo Xella; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1997), 402.

[41] Von Dassow, "Canaanite Cuneiformists," 214. A similar objection is expressed by John Huehnergard ("The Early Hebrew Prefix-Conjugations," *HS* 29 [1988]: 20).

[42] Tropper makes an identical claim for Ugaritic (*Ugaritische Grammatik*, §§73.261–62), just as he claims the -*a* suffix lends emphasis when added to the imperative (§§73.141, 73.143). Pardee gives a number of reasons to be skeptical of these interpretations, at least in Ugaritic (Review of Tropper, 216–17).

implications of Rainey's findings for Ugaritic. Pardee agrees that proto–West Semitic

must have had at least two energics, but he reconstructs them as *yaqtulan* and *yaqtulanna*

(the -*a*- coming from Arabic). As noted above, both a form with and a form without

consonantal ending are preferred to account for suffixed forms such as Ugaritic <yqtln>

(/*yaqtulannu*/ from */*yaqtulanhu*/), <yqtlnh> (/*yaqtulannahu*/), and the Hebrew suffixes

נוּ‎ֶ (< *-*anhu*), נְהוּ‎ֶ (< *-*annahu*).[43] To these two forms, then, one must add Rainey's

yaqtulun(n)a, resulting in three energic forms that a comparative grammar of Northwest

Semitic needs to account for. Pardee also asks how these forms differed semantically; that

is, what is the meaning of *yaqtulan(n)a* as opposed to *yaqtulun(n)a* (and, for that matter,

as opposed to *yaqtulan*)? He seems willing to accept an enclitic -*na* ("itself of uncertain

semantic content") that could be affixed in the indicative and injunctive modes if it could

be shown that a semantic distinction existed.[44]

Like Moran, Rainey finds only one example of an "apparent" injunctive energic,

timaḫ(ḫ)aṣananī, which is insufficient for testing any hypothesis and therefore calls his

paradigm into question. But in his examples of the indicative energic, one finds the form

yu-te-ru-na-ni, which he translates, "Let [the king] return to me" (EA 251:11–12).[45] One

should not conclude too much from a single example, but if Rainey's translation is

correct ("If [the king] will return to me" would also make sense in the context), then this

is an injunctive function, and perhaps the indicative energic form is encroaching upon the

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[43] Rainey states that the Hebrew suffixes come from the indicative energic, *yaqtuluna* (*Morphosyntactic Analysis*, 236), but Pardee rightly asks by what phonological mechanism one gets from *u* to *seghol* (Dennis Pardee, Review of Anson F. Rainey, *Canaanite in the Amarna Tablets: A Linguistic Analysis of the Mixed Dialect Used by Scribes from Canaan*, *JNES* 58 [October 1999]: 315).

[44] Pardee, Review of Rainey, 315.

[45] Rainey, *Morphosyntactic Analysis*, 241.

injunctive energic function.

To add to the messiness, Moran states that even "in many questions" that are "dubitous" or "querulous," where one might expect the energic, one does not find it.[46] What then can one say? If Von Dassow is correct (and Pardee appears willing to consider this) that enclitic *-na* can simply be affixed to indicative and injunctive forms that do not already end in *-na*, why is the energic apparently not found with the *yaqtul* preterit and jussive, and only on the *yaqtulu* and *yaqtula*?[47] Then again, is it legitimate for Rainey to group together three conjugations in the indicative mode in a hodgepodge manner (viz., the preterit is a tense form, the imperfect is largely aspectual, and the indicative energic is a "strengthening" of the imperfect)?[48]

The Evidence from Hebrew

Like Ugaritic, Hebrew exhibits multiple forms of some suffixed object pronouns. In the case of the third-person masculine singular, for example, one finds in Hebrew the suffixes הוּ◌ (or וֹ◌), ◌ֶנְהוּ, and ◌ֶנּוּ; similar forms exist for the first-person common, second-person masculine, and third-person feminine singular forms. The unassimilated forms (e.g., יַעֲבָרֶנְהוּ and יַעַבְרֶנְהוּ, Jer. 5:22; אֶתְּקֶנְךָ, Jer. 22:24) are rare.[49] These "heavy" suffixes appear on all forms but the wayyiqtol and the jussive, with no apparently semantic

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[46] Moran, *Amarna Studies*, 50–51.

[47] Anson F. Rainey, "The Energic in Northwest Semitic,"*Or* 77 (2008): 80.

[48] Cf. Huehnergaard, "Prefix-Conjugations," 20–21.

[49] Gesenius associates them with elevated style or poetry (E. Kautzch, ed., *Wilhelm Gesenius' Hebräische Grammatik* (28th rev. ed.; Leipzig: Vogel, 1909), §58k).

difference from the regular suffixes.[50]

Conclusion

So, what is the etymology of נָא in Hebrew? Its syntactical distribution differs too greatly

from *yaqtulūna* and *yaqtulīna* to be explained along the lines of *nun paragogicum*. Two

considerations lead to the conclusion that it is a remnant of the energic. The first is the

observation by both Moran and Rainey that the Amarna Canaanite energic adds strength

or emphasis, especially to questions. Second is the fact that the cohortative and long

imperative always appear with נָא. There is question as to whether the daghesh indicates

doubling,[51] but it certainly is tempting to see אַקְטְלָה־נָּא and קָטְלָה־נָּא as coming from an

energic in *-anna*.

The derivation may have happened in this way. As final short vowels dropped,

yaqtul, *yaqtulu*, and *yaqtula* merged. This formal collapse may have been too much

for speakers, and paradigmatic pressures may have forced the retention (and subsequent

lengthening) of *yaqtula* to *yaqtulā* (*'aqtulā* in the first person). Contemporary with this,

the energic *yaqtulanna* was being reinterpreted by speakers as the new *yaqtulā* with a -

(n)na (subsequently lengthened to -*[n]nā*) suffix—similar to the situation in Ugaritic (or

perhaps *-na* was always a free-floating enclitic). Since the energic was used with question

and requests, a productive suffix was born with this function and was added to other

volitional forms to stress their nature as requests.

The final א presents a challenge. Perhaps it is a *mater*; in the extrabiblical letters,

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[50] JM §61f.

[51] Bergsträsser thinks it does not (vol. 1, §10o, s); nor does Joshua Blau ("Marginalia Semitica III," *Israel Oriental Studies* 7 [1977]: 30). Joüon-Muraoka is noncommittal (§18h n. 5).

for example, final א can indicate -*ā*, but it is attested only in proper names, as a

hypocoristic ending,[52] in which case נָא would be an exceptional use. Moran's proposal

that perhaps "-*na* in final position developed a strong *aleph* (glottal catch), and then

became an enclitic particle that could be attached to other particles like *ʾim* and *ʾal*" is not

particularly satisfying either.[53]

In the end, however, Barr is right, and whatever the origin of נָא, etymology tells

us what a word *meant*, not what it *means*. For that, one must study its actual usage at a

given time, as we do in the remaining chapters.

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[52] Sandra Landis Gogel, *A Grammar of Epigraphic Hebrew* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), §2.3.2.6.

[53] William L. Moran, *Amarna Studies*, 11 n. 13.

CHAPTER 4

נָא IN THE TORAH AND FORMER PROPHETS

This chapter examines all occurrences of נָא in the Torah and Former Prophets and

includes commentary to set the context. The verbs used in the commentary to describe the

force of the volitional forms (e.g., "command," "order," "suggest," "invite," "ask,"

"propose") are deliberately chosen to prepare the reader for the interpretation that is

presented in the following chapter.

In the corpus examined below, נָא occurs 270 times in 245 verses:[1]

- Genesis: 74 occurrences in 64 verses

- Exodus: 15 occurrences in 13 verses

- Leviticus: 0 occurrences

- Numbers: 19 occurrences in 18 verses

- Deuteronomy: 2 occurrences in 2 verses

- Joshua: 4 occurrences in 3 verses

- Judges: 32 occurrences in 29 verses

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[1] Essentially the same result is reported in Francis I. Andersen and A. Dean Forbes, *The Vocabulary of the Old Testament* (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1989), 370; Andersen and Forbes's count is one higher, due to their including the kethib in 2 Kgs 5:18, where the particle נָא occurs unvocalized and with a note in the masorah parva that it is one of eight words written but not read; the other seven occur in 2 Sam 13:33; 15:21; Jer 38:16; 39:12; 51:3; Ezek 48:16; and Ruth 3:12 (Page H. Kelley, Daniel S. Mynatt, and Timothy G. Crawford, *The Masorah of* Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia: *Introduction and Annotated Glossary* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998], 121). The footnote in *BHS* observes that several manuscripts, the Syriac, and the Targums omit the particle. For these reasons, this instance is not included in the count and will not be discussed.

- 1 Samuel: 35 occurrences in 34 verses

- 2 Samuel: 36 occurrences in 33 verses

- 1 Kings: 19 occurrences in 17 verses

- 2 Kings: 34 occurrences in 32 verses

Genesis: Occurrences

12:11, 13. Gen 12:10–13:1 is the account of Abram and Sarai's sojourn in Egypt. In 12:11–13 Abram asks Sarai to tell the pharaoh that he is her brother. Abram calls attention (הִנֵּה־נָא, PARTICLE,[2] 12:11) to the fact that she is beautiful and the Egyptians will take her to the pharaoh and kill Abram. He asks her to therefore claim (אִמְרִי־נָא, IMPV., 12:13) that she is his sister.

13:8, 9. Abram proposes to Lot that there be no quarrels (אַל־נָא תְהִי מְרִיבָה, NEG. 3FS JUSS., v. 8) between them. If the current land cannot sustain both men's flocks, Lot should go off (הִפָּרֶד נָא מֵעָלָי, IMPV., v. 9) and have his choice of grazing land; Abram will take what is left.

13:14. After Lot chooses the land toward Sodom, Yhwh appears to Abram and repeats his promise to give Abram the vast land and to multiply his descendants (13:14–17). Yhwh invites him to look (שָׂא נָא עֵינֶיךָ וּרְאֵה, IMPV. + *waw*-impv., v. 14) at the vastness of the land and then tells him to explore (קוּם הִתְהַלֵּךְ, impv. + impv., v. 17) its length and breadth.

15:5. The formal covenant ceremony begins. Yhwh reassures Abram of his coming reward, and Abram objects that he still has no offspring. Yhwh insists this will

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[2] The labels for forms immediately followed by נָא are spelled in all caps to improve legibility.

not be so, leads Abram outside, and has him look up and attempt to count the stars (הַבֶּט־

נָא הַשָּׁמַיְמָה וּסְפֹר הַכּוֹכָבִים אִם־תּוּכַל, IMPV. + *waw*-impv., v. 5).

16:2 (*bis*). Sarai points out (הִנֵּה־נָא, PARTICLE, v. 2) that Yhwh has prevented

her from bearing children and proposes that Abram have offspring with Hagar (בֹּא־נָא אֶל־

שִׁפְחָתִי, IMPV.).

18:3 (*bis*), 4. Three visitors arrive, and at the age of 99, Abram runs out of his tent

and bows down to greet them. He asks him not to leave (אִם־נָא מָצָאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ אַל־נָא

תַעֲבֹר מֵעַל עַבְדֶּךָ, PROTASIS PARTICLE + NEG. 2MS JUSS. of apodosis, v. 3) and to let

him bring some water (יֻקַּח־נָא מְעַט־מַיִם, 3MS JUSS. PASS., v. 4) so that they can wash

their feet and then take a rest.

18:21, 27, 30, 31, 32. Abraham and his visitors' attention is turned to Sodom and

Gomorrah. Yhwh says that because of the cry against the two cities, he is thinking about

going down (אֵרֲדָה־נָּא, COHORT., v. 21) to investigate. Two of the visitors leave, and

Abraham haggles with Yhwh: Will he destroy Sodom if fifty righteous are there? Yhwh

replies that he will spare the city. Abraham points out (הִנֵּה־נָא, PARTICLE, v. 27) that he

has begun to haggle even though he is dust and ashes. He brings Yhwh down to forty-five

and then to forty. He asks Yhwh to restrain his anger (אַל־נָא יִחַר לַאדֹנָי, NEG. 3MS JUSS.,

v. 30) and brings him down to thirty. He repeats (הִנֵּה־נָא, PARTICLE, v. 31) that he is in

the midst of bargaining and brings Yhwh down to twenty; then, again asking Yhwh to

withhold his wrath, (אַל־נָא יִחַר לַאדֹנָי, NEG. 3MS JUSS., v. 32) he concludes the dealing

with ten.

19:2, 7, 8 (*bis*). The scene switches to Sodom, where the two visitors arrive. Lot

bows down in greeting and asks them to come over (הִנֶּה נָּא־אֲדֹנַי סוּרוּ נָא, PARTICLE +

IMPV., v. 2) to his home for the night. (That he "strongly urged them," וַיִּפְצַר־בָּם מְאֹד,

v. 3, suggests concern and urgency.) Soon, the men of the town come and demand that

Lot deliver the visitors up to them (הוֹצִיאֵם אֵלֵינוּ, impv., v. 5) for sex. Lot walks out of the

house alone and asks them not to act so wickedly (אַל־נָא אַחַי תָּרֵעוּ, NEG. 2MP JUSS.,

v. 7). He attempts to turn their attention (הִנֵּה־נָא, PARTICLE, v. 8) from the men to his

virgin daughters. He can bring them out, but the men may not harm his guests (אוֹצִיאָה־נָּא

אֶתְהֶן אֲלֵיכֶם וַעֲשׂוּ לָהֶן כַּטּוֹב בְּעֵינֵיכֶם רַק לָאֲנָשִׁים הָאֵל אַל־תַּעֲשׂוּ דָבָר, COHORT. + *waw*-impv.

+ neg. 2mp juss, v. 8). The townsfolk tell him to stand back and begin to assault the

house, at which time the messengers intervene.

19:18, 19, 20 (*bis*). The next morning, the visitors instruct Lot to flee to the hills

with his family. He hesitates, and they forcibly usher the family out of the house. Lot

protests (אַל־נָא אֲדֹנָי, NEG. INTERJECTION, v. 18): because (הִנֵּה־נָא, PARTICLE, v. 19)

he (עַבְדְּךָ) has found favor with them and they have saved his life, and because (הִנֵּה־נָא,

PARTICLE, v. 20) there is a small town close by, he proposes to flee there instead

(אִמָּלְטָה נָּא, COHORT., v. 20).

22:2. In the Akedah, Yhwh approaches Abraham and asks him to take his

beloved, special son Isaac and offer him as a burnt offering (קַח־נָא ... וְלֶךְ־לְךָ ... וְהַעֲלֵהוּ,

IMPV. + *waw*-impv. + *waw*-impv., v. 2).

24:2. Two chapters later, Abraham prepares to send his servant to find a wife for

Isaac. He asks the servant to place (שִׂים־נָא, IMPV., v. 2) his hand under Abraham's thigh

so that Abraham might have him swear a solemn oath.

JUSS.], v. 28) that he will leave them in peace and do them no harm.

27:2, 3. Isaac summons Esau one day. In light of the fact that he is old (הִנֵּה־נָא

זָקַנְתִּי, PARTICLE, v. 2) and death is inevitable, Esau should take his equipment, go out

into the field, hunt some game, prepare it, and bring it to Isaac (וְעַתָּה שָׂא־נָא כֵלֶיךָ ... וְצֵא ...

וְצוּדָה ... וַעֲשֵׂה ... וְהָבִיאָה, IMPV. + *waw*-impv. + *waw*–long impv. + *waw*-impv. + *waw*–

long impv., vv. 3–4) so that he can eat it and give Esau his blessing before he dies.

27:9. Rebekah has overheard Isaac's instructions to Esau. She repeats them to

Jacob and tells him to heed what she is about to say (וְעַתָּה ... שְׁמַע בְּקֹלִי, impv., v. 8): he is

to go out to the flock and fetch her (לֶךְ־נָא ... וְקַח, IMPV. + *waw*-impv., vv. 9) two young

goats to cook up for Isaac so that he can bring the food to his father for his blessing.

Jacob objects, but Rachel tells him to go and get the goats (אַךְ שְׁמַע בְּקֹלִי וְלֵךְ קַח, impv. +

waw-impv + impv, v. 13b), and he leaves.

27:19, 21, 26. Jacob goes in to Isaac, claiming to be Esau and stating that he has

followed his father's instructions. He offers him the prepared food (קוּם־נָא שְׁבָה וְאָכְלָה,

IMPV. + long impv. + *waw*–long impv., v. 19). Suspicious, Jacob asks his son to come

closer (גְּשָׁה־נָּא, LONG IMPV., v. 21) so that he can feel whether he really is Esau. After

being deceived, he allows Isaac to bring him (הַגִּשָׁה, long impv., v. 25) the food and then

asks him to come and kiss him (גְּשָׁה־נָּא וּשְׁקָה־לִּי, LONG IMPV. + *waw*–long impv., v. 26)

as the blessing starts.[3]

30:14. More than seven years have elapsed. Jacob's wives, Rachel and Leah, are

desperate for children and in competition. One day, Leah's oldest son brings her some

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[3] The blessing (vv. 26b–29) itself contains volitional forms without נָא but is not of a
conversational genre and therefore is irrelevant here.

mandrakes. Rachel finds out and asks Leah for some of them (תְּנִי־נָא, IMPV., v. 14). In exchange for the mandrakes, Rachel offers to give Leah a night with Jacob. Leah greets Jacob that evening as he is coming in from the field with a no-nonsense אֵלַי תָּבוֹא (modal yiqtol, v. 16).

30:27. More time elapses, and Joseph has just been born. Jacob asks Laban to let him (תְּנָה, long impv., v. 26) return to Canaan with his family. Laban begins his reply with אִם־נָא מָצָ֫אתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶ֫יךָ (PROTASIS PARTICLE, v. 27) and explains that Yhwh has blessed him because of Jacob. Then he says (וַיֹּאמַר, v. 28) that Jacob should name his price (נָקְבָה, long impv.. v. 28), and Laban will pay up in order to keep him.

31:12. Jacob prospers under this arrangement but hears Laban's sons grumbling in resentment. He tells his wives about how their father has treated him and recounts a dream in which a divine messenger came to him and asked him to take a look (שָׂא־נָא עֵינֶ֫יךָ וּרְאֵה, IMPV. + *waw*-impv., v. 12) at his flock. Then the messenger tells Jacob to leave and return (עַתָּה קוּם צֵא ... וְשׁוּב, impv. + impv. + *waw*-impv, v. 13) to Canaan.

32:12. Jacob and his family are on their way back to Canaan, about to pass through his brother's land. He learns that Esau is on his way to meet the company. In fear, Jacob divides the entourage into two groups. He then prays to Yhwh to deliver him (הַצִּילֵ֫נִי נָא, IMPV., v. 12) from Esau and to fulfill the covenant.

 32:30. That evening Jacob, alone, wrestles with a man. The man tells him to release him (שַׁלְּחֵ֫נִי, impv., v. 27), but Jacob demands a blessing first. The man asks him his name, Jacob answers, and the man renames him. Jacob asks the man to tell him (הַגִּֽידָה־נָּא, LONG IMPV., v. 30) his own name.

33:10 (*bis*), 11, 14, 15. Perhaps that same morning, Esau's party approaches.

When Esau sees Jacob, he runs to greet him and his family. When Jacob, referring to himself as עַבְדְּךָ (v. 5), offers some of his entourage as a gift to gain Esau's favor (לִמְצֹא־אַל־נָא אִם־נָא מָצָאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ, v. 8), Esau declines. Jacob urges Esau to take (חֵן בְּעֵינֵי אֲדֹנִי וְלָקַחְתָּ ... קַח־נָא, NEG. INTERJECTION + PROTASIS PARTICLE + wəqataltí of apodosis + IMPV., vv. 10–11) his gift. Esau accepts and suggests Jacob follow him on the way. Jacob asks that he simply go on ahead (יַעֲבָר־נָא אֲדֹנִי לִפְנֵי עַבְדּוֹ, 3MS JUSS., v. 14; Jacob addresses Esau as אֲדֹנִי later in the same verse) and not wait for the slower children and livestock to catch up with him. Esau offers to leave some of his people with Jacob (אַצִּיגָה־נָּא עִמְּךָ, COHORT., v. 15).

34:8. Some time later, perhaps, Shechem defiles Jacob's daughter, Dinah. Jacob's sons hear of it and come in from the field, furious. Hamor addresses Jacob's family, asking that they give her to Shechem in marriage (תְּנוּ נָא אֹתָהּ לוֹ לְאִשָּׁה, IMPV., v. 8).

Shechem is present as well. He begins his address by saying that he wants to be considered a friend (אֶמְצָא־חֵן בְּעֵינֵיכֶם, cohort., v. 11) and then offers Jacob and his sons whatever they ask in exchange for Dinah: הַרְבּוּ עָלַי ... וְאֶתֵּנָה ... וּתְנוּ־לִי אֶת־הַנַּעֲרָ (*sic*; impv.; *waw*-impv., v. 12).

37:6. Three chapters later, the narrative turns to Jacob's son Joseph. Joseph asks his brothers to listen a dream he had (שִׁמְעוּ־נָא הַחֲלוֹם הַזֶּה, IMPV., v. 6) and tells it to them, after which his brothers hate him still more. In the next verse the reader is told that Joseph had another dream, but this time Joseph forgoes the imperative when telling the dream to his father and brothers.

37:14, 16. In the following scene, Joseph's brothers are pasturing their flocks near Shechem. Jacob summons Joseph (לְכָה, long impv., v. 13), who consents to go. Jacob

then tells him, לֶךְ־נָא רְאֵה אֶת־שְׁלוֹם אַחֶיךָ ... וַהֲשִׁבֵנִי דָבָר (IMPV. + impv. + *waw*-impv., v. 14). On the way, a man comes across Joseph wandering about and asks him what he is looking for. Joseph says he is trying to find his brothers and then asks, הַגִּידָה־נָּא לִי אֵיפֹה הֵם רֹעִים (LONG IMPV., v. 16).

37:32. Joseph's brothers sell him to some Midianites passing by. Then they take his robe, dip it in goat blood, and bring it to their father, saying, הַכֶּר־נָא הַכְּתֹנֶת בִּנְךָ הִוא אִם־לֹא (IMPV., v. 32). Jacob identifies the robe as Joseph's and mourns.

38:16. The account leaves Joseph in Egypt while it tells of an event involving Judah. His daughter-in-law, Tamar, has been left childless and decides to take matters into her own hands. She disguises herself as a prostitute and intercepts Judah one day, who propositions her (הָבָה־נָּא אָבוֹא אֵלַיִךְ, LONG IMPV. + cohort., v. 16).

38:25. Three months later, Judah is told that Tamar is pregnant due to immoral behavior. He orders that she be brought out and burned. Tamar produces the collateral Jacob gave her and asks that they be identified (הַכֶּר־נָא, IMPV., v. 25). Jacob identifies them and exonerates her.

40:8, 14. The narrative returns to Joseph. While in prison, he meets the royal baker and cupbearer, both of whom have had dreams. Joseph notes that God is the final interpreter of dreams and says, סַפְּרוּ־נָא לִי (IMPV., v. 8). The cupbearer begins, and Joseph gives a favorable interpretation. Joseph makes a request: כִּי אִם־זְכַרְתַּנִי אִתְּךָ ... וְעָשִׂיתָ־נָּא עִמָּדִי חָסֶד ... וְהוֹצֵאתַנִי (qatal + WĔQATALTÍ[4]+ wəqataltí, v. 14)—after all, he

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[4] JM §112k, n. 2, refers to זְכַרְתַּנִי as "difficult" and perhaps an optative use of the qatal, "but the text does not seems to be in a good state"; nothing in *BHS* suggests textual corruption, but it is tempting to ascribe optative meaning to the wəqataltí forms that follow, though JM limits this use to poetry and elevated speech. *IBHS* §32.2.3d states that especially in Deuteronomy, but also here, "*wəqataltí* represents

says, he has been wrongly incarcerated.

44:18, 33. Later, Joseph's brothers stand before him, accused of having stolen his silver divining cup. Joseph states that the one in whose possession the cup was found will be detained. Judah ventures to ask a favor: בִּי אֲדֹנִי יְדַבֶּר־נָא עַבְדְּךָ דָבָר בְּאָזְנֵי אֲדֹנִי וְאַל־יִחַר אַפְּךָ בְּעַבְדֶּךָ (3MS JUSS. + neg. 3ms juss, v. 18). Leaving Benjamin in Egypt would kill their father, who has already lost the other son he had with his wife Rachel. Before returning to Egypt, Judah pledged himself for Benjamin's safety, and hence comes his request: וְעַתָּה יֵשֶׁב־נָא עַבְדְּךָ תַּחַת הַנַּעַר עֶבֶד לַאדֹנִי וְהַנַּעַר יַעַל עִם־אֶחָיו (3MS JUSS. + 3ms juss., v. 33).

45:4. Joseph finally reveals his identity to his brothers, who become terrified. But he asks them to come near (גְּשׁוּ־נָא אֵלַי, IMPV., v. 4) and reassures them.

47:4. The brothers are reconciled, and the family is brought to Egypt. When Joseph presents some of his brothers to the pharaoh, they request permission to settle (וְעַתָּה יֵשְׁבוּ־נָא עֲבָדֶיךָ, 3MP JUSS., v. 4) in Goshen.

47:29 (*tris*). Jacob considers his impending death and summons Joseph. He says, אִם־נָא מָצָאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ שִׂים־נָא יָדְךָ תַּחַת יְרֵכִי וְעָשִׂיתָ עִמָּדִי חֶסֶד וֶאֱמֶת אַל־נָא תִקְבְּרֵנִי בְּמִצְרָיִם ... וּנְשָׂאתַנִי מִמִּצְרַיִם וּקְבַרְתַּנִי בִּקְבֻרָתָם (PROTASIS PARTICLE + IMPV. + wəqataltí; NEG. 2MS JUSS. + wəqataltí + wəqataltí, vv. 29–30).

48:9. Joseph brings his sons to Joseph to be blessed. He presents them, and Jacob calls them over (קָחֶם־נָא אֵלַי, IMPV., v. 9).

50:4 (*bis*), 5. Jacob dies, and a period of national mourning passes. Joseph asks

the entreaty form."

Pharaoh's family to approach Pharaoh on his behalf: אִם־נָא מָצָאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֵיכֶם דַּבְּרוּ־נָא

בְּאָזְנֵי פַרְעֹה לֵאמֹר ... וְעַתָּה אֶעֱלֶה־נָּא (PROTASIS PARTICLE + IMPV. + COHORT., vv. 4–

5). Pharaoh grants his wish (אֶעֱלֶה וְקֶבֹּר אֶת־אָבִיךָ, impv. + *waw*-impv., v. 6).

50:17 (*bis*). With Jacob dead, the brothers fear revenge from Joseph. They convey

a message allegedly from their father: שָׂא נָא פֶּשַׁע אַחֶיךָ (reported speech[IMPV.], v. 17a). They

conclude with the request וְעַתָּה שָׂא נָא לְפֶשַׁע עַבְדֵי אֱלֹהֵי אָבִיךָ (IMPV., v. 17b).

Genesis: Statistics

The particle נָא is used the following syntactic constructions:

1. הִנֵּה נָא (or הִנֵּה נָא, הִנֵּה־נָא, etc.) is followed by a volitional with נָא 7 times (12:11;
   16:2; 19:2, 8, 19, 20; 27:2). [5]

2. הִנֵּה נָא is *not* followed by a volitional with נָא twice (18:27, 31; in both instances, a
   verbless, nonvolitional clause follows).

3. אִם־נָא (each time in the phrase אִם־נָא מָצָאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ) is followed by an apodosis
   with a volitional and נָא 4 times (18:3; 33:10; 47:29; 50:4).

4. אִם־נָא is *not* followed by a volitional with נָא twice. In 24:42, the expression אִם־
   יֶשְׁךָ־נָּא מַצְלִיחַ דַּרְכִּי אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי הֹלֵךְ עָלֶיהָ is a self-contained optative rather than a
   true protasis; in 30:27, the expression אִם־נָא מָצָאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ appears, but then the
   speaker breaks off to something else.

5. אַל־נָא is used as a negative interjection twice (19:18; 33:10).

6. נָא is paired with an imperative 32 times (12:13; 13:9, 14; 15:5; 16:2; 19:2; 22:2;

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[5] Though the force of נָא may carry over to multiple verbs in an utterance, only the form
immediately followed by נָא is included in the tallies.

24:2, 12, 14, 17, 23; 25:30; 27:3, 9, 19; 30:14; 31:12; 32:12; 33:11; 34:8; 37:6, 14, 32; 38:25; 40:8; 45:4; 47:29; 48:9; 50:4, 17 [*bis*]).[6] Note that 50:17 is an instance of reported speech.

7. נָא appears with a long imperative 5 times (27:21, 26; 32:30; 37:16; 38:16).[7]

8. נָא is used with the cohortative 5 times (18:21; 19:8, 20; 33:15; 50:5).

9. נָא is used with the third-person jussive 9 times (13:8; 18:4, 30, 32; 26:28; 33:14; 44:18, 33; 47:4), 3 of which involve negation with אַל־נָא. Note that 26:28 involves reported speech.

10. אַל־נָא is used with the second-person jussive 3 times (18:3; 19:7; 47:29).

11. Somewhat enigmatically, נָא is used with the wəqataltí (in sequence with a qatal that appears to express a petition) once, in 40:14.

Exodus: Occurrences

3:3. Moses is pasturing his father-in-law's flock when the angel of Yahweh appears in a burning bush. Moses proposes to turn aside (אָסֻרָה־נָּא, COHORT., v. 3) to take a look.

3:18; 5:3. Yahweh speaks to Moses from the bush. Moses is to return to Egypt to speak with the elders, and then they are to go to Pharaoh: Yahweh has met with them, and now they wish to go off (וְעַתָּה נֵלֲכָה־נָּא דֶּרֶךְ, reported speech[COHORT.], 3:18) in order to sacrifice to him. In 5:3, Moses and Aaron go to Pharaoh and deliver the request, without וְעַתָּה.

4:6. Yahweh gives Moses a series of signs to convince the elders of his message.

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[6] The syntagm appears 34 times total, but 24:43, 45 are a repetition of 24:17.

[7] Cf. p. 46 for a brief discussion of the euphonic dagesh in נָּא.

First, he is to throw his staff (הַשְׁלִיכֵהוּ, impv., v. 3) to the ground. It becomes a serpent, and he is to grab it with his hand (שְׁלַח יָדְךָ וֶאֱחֹז, impv. + *waw*-impv., v. 4), at which point it becomes a staff again. Second, he is to stick his hand (הָבֵא־נָא, IMPV., v. 6) into his cloak. It becomes leprous, and then he is to put it back (הָשֵׁב, impv., v. 7) into his cloak, at which point it is restored.

4:13. Moses objects to the plan. Even with the signs, he is a poor speaker. Yhwh counters that he has power to give Moses the words. But Moses continues to resist: בִּי אֲדֹנָי שְׁלַח־נָא בְּיַד־תִּשְׁלָח (IMPV., v. 13)

4:18. In the end, Moses returns to Jethro and asks to be allowed to go back to Egypt: אֵלְכָה נָּא וְאָשׁוּבָה אֶל־אַחַי (COHORT. + *waw*-cohort. / indirect cohort., v. 18).

10:11. After seven plagues, Moses and Aaron return to Pharaoh with their request that the people be allowed to go worship Yahweh. Pharaoh agrees only to let the men go: לְכוּ־נָא הַגְּבָרִים וְעִבְדוּ אֶת־יְהוָה (IMPV. + *waw*-impv., v. 11).

10:17. The eighth plague follows. Locusts inundate the land until Pharaoh summons Moses and Aaron in haste (וַיְמַהֵר, v. 16) and confesses that he has sinned against Yahweh and against Moses and Aaron. He asks for forgiveness: וְעַתָּה שָׂא נָא חַטָּאתִי אַךְ הַפַּעַם וְהַעְתִּירוּ לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם (IMPV. + *waw*-impv., v. 17).[8]

11:2. After another plague, Pharaoh remains obstinate. Yahweh announces to Moses that he will bring one more plague and that Moses should tell (דַּבֶּר־נָא, IMPV., v. 2) the people to ask the Egyptians for gold and silver jewelry.

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[8] Note that similar requests from Pharaoh for pardon or intercession to this point have not included נָא: 8:8, 28b; 9:28. Nor does נָא appear in Pharaoh's request after the final plague (וּבֵרַכְתֶּם גַּם־אֹתִי, wəqataltí [following an impv.], 12:32).

32:32. In the middle of receiving instruction for the tabernacle, Moses comes down from Mount Sinai to the Israelite camp, where he encounters the golden calf. After dealing with the situation, Moses ascends Mount Sinai and pleads with Yahweh to forgive their sin; otherwise, he would prefer to removed from Yhwh's "book": וְעַתָּה ... מְחֵנִי נָא מִסִּפְרְךָ (IMPV., v. 32).

33:13 (*bis*), 18; 34:9. The covenant has been given, and Moses is back among the Israelites. Feeling the burden of leading the people alone, he asks for help: וְעַתָּה אִם־נָא מָצָאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ הוֹדִעֵנִי נָא אֶת־דְּרָכֶךָ ... וּרְאֵה (*sic*; PROTASIS PARTICLE + IMPV. + impv., 33:13). Yhwh replies that he himself will accompany Moses, that Moses has indeed found his favor, and that Yhwh knows him by name. Moses then asks that he be shown (הַרְאֵנִי נָא, IMPV., 33:18) Yhwh's glory.

Yhwh agrees to Moses's request and passes before him, showing only the trailing edge of his glory. Moses bows his head in worship and repeats his earlier request: אִם־נָא מָצָאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ אֲדֹנָי יֵלֶךְ־נָא אֲדֹנָי בְּקִרְבֵּנוּ ... וְסָלַחְתָּ לַעֲוֹנֵנוּ וּלְחַטָּאתֵנוּ וּנְחַלְתָּנוּ (PROTASIS PARTICLE + 3MS JUSS. + wəqaltaltí + wəqaltaltí + wəqaltaltí, 34:9).

Exodus: Statistics

The particle נָא is used the following syntactic constructions:

1. אִם־נָא (each time in the phrase אִם־נָא מָצָאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ) is followed by an apodosis with a volitional and נָא twice (33:13; 34:19).

2. נָא is paired with an imperative 8 times (4:6, 13; 10:11, 17; 11:2; 32:32; 33:33, 18).

3. נָא is used with the cohortative 3 times (3:3, 18;[9] 4:18).

4. נָא is used with the jussive once (34:9).

Numbers: Occurrences

10:31. Almost a year after the exodus, Israel strikes camp to depart from Mount Sinai. Moses invites his brother-in-law to come along, but Hobab wants to return to his home. Moses insists (אַל־נָא תַּעֲזֹב אֹתָנוּ, NEG. 2MS JUSS., v. 31), for Israel can use a guide who is familiar with the area.

11:15. On the march, the people murmur regarding the lack of variety in their diet: manna, day in and day out. Both Yhwh and Moses are angered, and Moses complains: Where is he going to find meat to supplement the manna? He doesn't deserve having to lead a nation of complainers; the burden is too heavy. He asks to be put out of his misery: וְאִם־כָּכָה אַתְּ־עֹשֶׂה לִּי הָרְגֵנִי נָא הָרֹג אִם־מָצָאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ (IMPV., v. 15).

12:6, 11, 12, 13 (*bis*). Aaron and Miriam complain about Moses's Cushite wife and his notoriety. Yhwh hears it and summons the three to the tent of meeting. He tells them to hear what he has to say (שִׁמְעוּ־נָא דְבָרָי, IMPV., v. 6): whereas he communicates with prophets in dreams, he speaks with Moses clearly and face to face. He leaves in anger and strikes Miriam with a skin disease. Aaron pleads with Moses not to hold (בִּי אֲדֹנִי אַל־נָא תָשֵׁת, NEG. 2MS JUSS., v. 11) the sin against them, not to let Miriam be like the dead (אַל־נָא תְהִי כַּמֵּת, NEG. 3FS JUSS., v. 12), and Moses entreats Yhwh to heal her (אֵל נָא רְפָא נָא לָהּ, INTERJECTION + IMPV., v. 13).

14:17, 19. The spies return from surveying Canaan, leading to a rebellion. Yhwh

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[9] This instance is duplicated in 5:3 and therefore not considered here.

tells Moses he will destroy the people, to which Moses replies that the Egyptians and the Canaanites will hear about it and think Yhwh impotent to deliver his people: his reputation is on the line. Moses pleads, וְעַתָּה יִגְדַּל־נָא כֹּחַ אֲדֹנָי (3MS JUSS., v. 17), and then quotes Yhwh's own declarations of his patience, forgiveness, and love. He continues, סְלַח־נָא לַעֲוֹן הָעָם הַזֶּה כְּגֹדֶל חַסְדֶּךָ (IMPV., v. 19).

16:8. Korah and his followers challenge Moses's authority as the people's leader. Moses accuses Korah: שִׁמְעוּ־נָא בְּנֵי לֵוִי (IMPV., v. 8), isn't it enough of an honor that Yhwh has set their tribe apart from the others to serve at the tabernacle?

16:26. The next morning comes. Yhwh threatens to destroy the people, but Moses intercedes. Yhwh instructs Moses to have the people back away from the antagonists' houses. Moses warns the people, סוּרוּ נָא מֵעַל אָהֳלֵי הָאֲנָשִׁים הָרְשָׁעִים הָאֵלֶּה וְאַל־תִּגְּעוּ בְּכָל־אֲשֶׁר לָהֶם (IMPV. + *waw*–neg. 2mp juss., v. 26).

20:10. Faced with no water, Israel quarrels with Moses again, wishing they had stayed in Egypt. Yhwh appears to Moses and Aaron, instructing them to command water to come forth from a rock, and then Moses assembles the people and tells them to listen up (שִׁמְעוּ־נָא הַמֹּרִים, IMPV., v. 10) as he strikes the rock.

20:17. Moses sends messengers to Edom to request permission to cross through the land. Israel, Edom's brother, asks to pass through (נַעְבְּרָה־נָּא, COHORT., v. 17) the land and promises to stay on the main highway.[10] When Edom denies the request, Israel again promises to remain along the highway and to pay for anything it uses. Moses repeats that they just want to pass through (רַק אֵין־דָּבָר בְּרַגְלַי אֶעֱבֹרָה, cohort., v. 19).

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[10] Note that Moses's similar request to Sihon is אֶעְבְּרָה בְאַרְצֶךָ (*sic* L), without נָא. Then again, Sihon and the Amorites are not addressed as אָחִיךָ.

22:6. Balak sees Israel camped on the plains of Moab. The people are numerous and pose a threat, so Balak sends messengers to hire Balaam: ־אֶת לִי־אָרָה נָא־לְכָה וְעַתָּה הַזֶּה הָעָם (LONG IMPV. + long impv., v. 6).

22:16, 17, 19. Balaam is told by Yhwh not to go to Balak, so Balak sends his officers to proposition Balaam again: הָעָם אֶת לִי־קָבָה נָא־וּלְכָה ... אֵלָי מֵהֲלֹךְ תִמָּנַע נָא־אַל הַזֶּה (NEG. 2MS JUSS. + *waw*–LONG IMPV. + long impv., vv. 16–17). Balaam refuses a second time but hedges: הַלָּיְלָה אַתֶּם־גַם בָזֶה נָא שְׁבוּ וְעַתָּה (IMPV., v. 19).[11]

23:13, 27. Defying Yhwh, Balaam agrees to meet Balak. But his first utterance, from Yhwh, is a blessing. Balak asks him to try again, from a different location: נָא־לְכָה מִשָּׁם לִי־וְקָבְנוּ ... אַחֵר מָקוֹם־אֶל אִתִּי (LONG IMPV. + *waw*-impv., v. 13). But again Balaam can only bless. So Balak suggests moving yet again: אַחֵר מָקוֹם־אֶל אֶקָחֲךָ נָא־לְכָה (LONG IMPV., v. 27). Still no luck: Balaam blesses Israel a third time.

Numbers: Statistics

1. נָא is used as an interjection once (12:13).

2. נָא is paired with an imperative 8 times (11:15;[12] 12:6, 13; 14:19; 16:8, 26; 20:10; 22:19).

3. נָא appears with a long imperative 4 times (22:6, 17; 23:13, 27)

4. נָא is used with the cohortative once (20:17).

5. נָא is used with the third-person jussive once (14:17).

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[11] When the messengers first came to Balaam, he invited them to stay the night, but without using נָא: הַלַּיְלָה פֹה לִינוּ (impv., v. 8).

[12] 11:15 is an apodosis followed by its protasis, בְּעֵינֶיךָ חֵן מָצָאתִי־אִם (one of 2 occurrences of this expression lacking נָא in the selected corpus).

6. אַל־נָא is used with the second-person jussive 4 times (10:31; 12:11, 12; 22:16).

Deuteronomy: Occurrences

3:25. Moses recounts the nation's history to a new generation and tells of how Yhwh in his anger had refused to let him enter the land. Moses says he pleaded (וָאֶתְחַנַּן, v. 23) with Yhwh to let him cross over (אֶעְבְּרָה־נָּא, COHORT., v. 25) so that he might see the land.

4:32. In his moral instruction to the nation, Moses calls on the people to reflect upon just who Yhwh is: go ahead, consult with history itself or with the vast expanse of the heavens (כִּי שְׁאַל־נָא לְיָמִים רִאשֹׁנִים ... וּלְמִקְצֵה הַשָּׁמַיִם וְעַד־קְצֵה הַשָּׁמָיִם, IMPV., v. 32), and they will testify to Yhwh's power and delivering care.

Deuteronomy: Statistics

1. נָא is used with the cohortative once (3:25).

2. נָא is paired with an imperative once (4:32).

Joshua: Occurrences

2:12. Rahab speaks to the Hebrew spies she is harboring and tells them that news of Yhwh's deliverance has caused fear throughout the land. She expresses her faith in Yhwh and asks the spies to swear that they will spare her family when Israel attacks Jericho (וְעַתָּה הִשָּׁבְעוּ־נָא לִי בַּיהוָה ... וַעֲשִׂיתֶם ... חֶסֶד וּנְתַתֶּם לִי אוֹת אֱמֶת, IMPV. + wəqataltí + wəqataltí, v. 12).

7:19 (*bis*). After Israel's initial defeat at Ai, it is revealed that Achan has sinned.

Joshua says to him, בְּנִי שִׂים־נָא כָבוֹד לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְתֶן־לוֹ תוֹדָה וְהַגֶּד־נָא לִי מֶה עָשִׂיתָ

אַל־תְּכַחֵד מִמֶּנִּי (IMPV. + *waw*-impv. + *waw*-IMPV. + neg. 2ms juss., v. 19).

22:26. After the conquest and the tribes are settled, it is discovered that those in Transjordan have erected an altar. Confronted, the Transjordan tribes defend the altar as serving to remind all of their link to the rest of Israel: it is a witness, not a competitor. Fearful that the physical border of the Jordan would prove to be a national or covenantal border in generations to come, they had consulted among themselves: וַנֹּאמֶר נַעֲשֶׂה־נָּא לָּנוּ לִבְנוֹת אֶת־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ (reported speech[COHORT.], v. 26).

Joshua: Statistics

1. נָא is used with a cohortative once (22:26, reported speech).

2. נָא is paired with an imperative 3 times (2:12; 7:19 [*bis*]). One of the occurrences in 7:19 involves a *waw*-imperative that is part of a chain of imperatives (the first of which—without *waw*—is paired with נָא).

Judges: Occurrences

1:24. Preparing to take Bethel, the Ephraimites send out spies, who meet one of the locals exiting the city. They make a deal: if he will show them (הַרְאֵנוּ נָא, IMPV., v. 24) the entrance to the city, they will grant him his his life.

4:19. Sisera's army attacks but is routed by Barak and his men. Sisera flees and heads to the dwelling of Jael, whose wife greets him outside the tent and invites him to come in. Safe inside, he asks her for some water (הַשְׁקִינִי־נָא מְעַט־מַיִם , IMPV., v. 19) and has her stand watch.

6:17, 18. The angel of Yhwh appears to Gideon, who complains (prefacing his statement with בִּי אֲדֹנִי, v. 13) that Yhwh has turned Israel over to Midian. The angel (so LXX; MT has יְהוָה, v. 14) sends Gideon to deliver Israel, to which Gideon objects (this time with בִּי אֲדֹנָי, v. 15). The angel/Yhwh promises Gideon victory, and Gideon requests, (PROTASIS PARTICLE + אִם־נָא מָצָאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ וְעָשִׂיתָ לִּי אוֹת ... אַל־נָא תָמֻשׁ מִזֶּה waqaltí[13] of apodosis; NEG. 2MS JUSS., vv. 17–18).

6:39 (*bis*). Gideon agrees to acknowledge Yhwh's promise if he wakes up to find a damp piece of wool on the threshing floor. When that occurs, he bargains again: אַל־יִחַר אַפְּךָ בִּי ... אֲנַסֶּה נָּא־רַק־הַפַּעַם בַּגִּזָּה יְהִי־נָא חֹרֶב אֶל־הַגִּזָּה לְבַדָּהּ וְעַל־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ יִהְיֶה־טָּל (neg. 3ms juss + COHORT. + 3MS JUSS. + modal yiqtol [i.e., "there needs to be"], v. 39).

7:3. Gideon is told that he has too many men for Yhwh to get the credit for the victory. Yhwh tells him to give them a message (וְעַתָּה קְרָא נָא בְּאָזְנֵי הָעָם, IMPV., v. 3).

8:5. Gideon and his men are in pursuit of the Midianite kings Zebah and Zalmunna. They arrive at Succoth and ask the people there for some bread (תְּנוּ־נָא כִּכְּרוֹת לֶחֶם, IMPV., v. 5), since they are exhausted and pursuing the enemy.

9:2. Gideon's son Abimelech visits his mother's relatives in Shechem, where he suggests to them, דַּבְּרוּ־נָא בְּאָזְנֵי כָל־בַּעֲלֵי שְׁכֶם (IMPV., v. 2). He suggests that rule be given to him instead of to Gideon's many sons.

9:38. Gaal the son of Ebed comes on the scene as a competitor to Abimelech. The leader of Shechem tells Abimelech of the revolt that Gaal is planning, and he is advised to set an ambush for Gaal. When Gaal stands at Shechem's gate the next morning and

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[13] Cf. JM §43b: "In ל״א and ל״ה verbs the stress often does not advance" in the waqaltí.

sees Abimelech's men coming for him, Shechem's leader taunts him: Now where is his boasting? Isn't this group of people coming to get him the very men he scorned? צֵא־נָא עַתָּה וְהִלָּחֶם בּוֹ (IMPV. + *waw*-impv., v. 38), the town's leader says.

10:15. After eighteen years of oppression, Israel calls out to Yhwh. Yhwh replies that for many years he has delivered the nation, even though it has gone after other gods; this time, the people should look to those gods for deliverance. The irony is not lost on Israel, and the people confesses, חָטָאנוּ עֲשֵׂה־אַתָּה לָּנוּ כְּכָל־הַטּוֹב בְּעֵינֶיךָ אַךְ הַצִּילֵנוּ נָא הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה (impv. + IMPV., v. 15).

11:17, 19. Jephthah sends messengers to Ammon's king asking why he has come up to fight. Ammon replies that it wants the land returned that Israel took during the trek out of Egypt. Jephthah counters that during its travels Israel asked not just Edom (אֶעְבְּרָה־נָּא בְאַרְצֶךָ, reported speech[COHORT.], v. 17) but also Moab for permission to pass through their lands and had been rebuffed, so they took the long way around the nations. They asked Sihon as well (נַעְבְּרָה־נָּא בְאַרְצֶךָ, reported speech[COHORT.], v. 19) and were answered with an army.

12:6. During their hostilities with Ephraim, the Gileadites take control of the Jordan fords. Those who wish to cross are made to say *šibbōleṯ* (אֱמָר־נָא שִׁבֹּלֶת, IMPV., v. 6); those who say *śibbōleṯ* are taken to be Ephraimite, seized, and killed.

13:3, 4. The angel of Yhwh appears to Manoah's wife (soon to be Samson's mother) and points out (הִנֵּה־נָא, PARTICLE, v. 3) that she is barren and has not given birth, yet she will become pregnant and give birth to a son. In light of this (וְעַתָּה, v. 4) she will need to take precautions: הִשָּׁמְרִי נָא וְאַל־תִּשְׁתִּי יַיִן וְשֵׁכָר וְאַל־תֹּאכְלִי כָּל־טָמֵא (IMPV. + *waw*–neg. 2fs juss. / neg. indirect juss. + *waw*–neg. 2fs juss. / neg. indirect juss., v. 4).

13:8. After his wife tells him of the encounter, Manoah prays that God would send back the messenger (בִּי אֲדוֹנָי אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים ... יָבוֹא־נָא עוֹד אֵלֵינוּ, 3MS JUSS., v. 8) to show them what to do.

13:15. The messenger returns and confirms to Manoah the same instructions given to his wife. Manoah then asks him to stay for dinner: נַעְצְרָה־נָּא אוֹתָךְ וְנַעֲשֶׂה לְפָנֶיךָ גְּדִי עִזִּים (COHORT. + *waw*-cohort. / indirect cohort., v. 15).

14:12. Samson throws a feast at Timnah for the Philistine woman he is about to marry. Samson suggests a game to those in attendance: אָחוּדָה־נָּא לָכֶם (COHORT, v. 12). If the men can guess within seven days, he will present them with thirty sets of garments; otherwise, they must give him the garments. The guests finally threaten Samson's wife and family, and then, when they answer the riddle, Samson provides the garments off the backs of thirty men he kills in Ashkelon.

15:2. A while later, Samson goes to visit his wife, but her father won't permit it; he says, possibly apologetically, that he genuinely thought (אָמֹר אָמַרְתִּי) Samson really hated her (שָׂנֹא שְׂנֵאתָהּ, v. 2), so he has given her to Samson's friend. Instead, he offers her younger, more beautiful sister as a consolation: תְּהִי־נָא לְךָ תַּחְתֶּיהָ (IMPV., v. 2).

16:6, 10. Later still, Samson strikes up a relationship with Delilah. The Philistine leaders bribe her to discover Samson's weakness. She apparently accepts, for the narrator next has her asking Samson to tell her (הַגִּידָה־נָּא, LONG IMPV., v. 6) his secret. Samson tells her a lie, which she passes on to the Philistines, who attempt it—while he is with her—with predictable failure.

Rather than dumping her, Samson returns, for again, the narrator next has her scolding him and repeating the question in verse 10 (LONG IMPV.). Again the attempt

fails, and again Samson returns to his betrayer's arms. The narrator records her third

attempt at asking—הַגִּידָה לִּי (without נָא, v. 13).

16:28 (*bis*). Finally captured, Samson stands between two load-bearing pillars as

he provides entertainment for the Philistine leaders during a celebration. He prays to God

for one last bit of supernatural strength: אֲדֹנָי יֱהֹוִה זָכְרֵנִי נָא וְחַזְּקֵנִי נָא אַךְ הַפַּעַם הַזֶּה הָאֱלֹהִים

(IMPV. + *waw*-IMPV., v. 28).

18:5. Some scouts from Dan come across a Levite serving as priest at the house of

a certain Micah. Their mission is to find an area where Dan could settle, since their

original inheritance was successfully defended by the Amorites (1:34). They ask him to

consult with God (שְׁאַל־נָא בֵאלֹהִים, IMPV., 18:5) for them, and he confirms their mission:

לְכוּ לְשָׁלוֹם (impv., v. 6).

19:6, 8, 9 (*bis*). A Levite heads to Bethlehem to reconcile with his runaway

concubine. The woman's father happily detains him for three days. On the fourth, as the

Levite is ready to leave, his father-in-law invites him to stay a little longer: הוֹאֶל־נָא וְלִין

וְיִטַב לְבֶךָ (IMPV. + *waw*-impv. + *waw*–3ms juss., v. 6). On the fifth, the father-in-law

again offers, סְעָד־נָא לְבָבְךָ וְהִתְמַהְמְהוּ (IMPV. + *waw*-impv., v. 8). After dinner, the couple

is ready to head on their way, and the father-in-law urges them to stay the night: הִנֵּה נָא

רָפָה הַיּוֹם לַעֲרֹב לִינוּ־נָא ... לִין פֹּה וְיִטַב לְבָבֶךָ וְהִשְׁכַּמְתֶּם מָחָר לְדַרְכְּכֶם וְהָלַכְתָּ לְאֹהָלֶךָ

(PARTICLE + IMPV. + impv. + *waw*–3ms juss. + wəqataltí + wəqataltí, v. 9).

19:11. The couple passes near Jebus, and the Levite's servant suggests they spend

the night in the city (לְכָה־נָא וְנָסוּרָה אֶל־עִיר־הַיְבוּסִי הַזֹּאת, LONG IMPV. + *waw*-cohort.,

v. 11).[14]

19:23, 24. The couple spends a night at Gibeah, where the local men beat on their host's door and demand that the Levite be brought out. The host goes outside and pleads with them: אַל־אַחַי אַל־תָּרֵעוּ נָא ... אַל־תַּעֲשׂוּ אֶת־הַנְּבָלָה הַזֹּאת ... הִנֵּה בִתִּי הַבְּתוּלָה וּפִילַגְשֵׁהוּ אוֹצִיאָה־נָּא אוֹתָם ... וְלָאִישׁ הַזֶּה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ דְּבַר הַנְּבָלָה הַזֹּאת (NEG. INTERJECTION + NEG. 2MP JUSS. + 2mp neg. juss., v. 23; presentation particle + COHORT.; neg. modal yiqtol., v. 24).

Judges: Statistics

1. הִנֵּה נָא is followed by a volitional with נָא twice (13:3; 19:9).

2. אִם־נָא (in the phrase אִם־נָא מָצָאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ) is followed by an apodosis with a volitional and נָא once (6:17).

3. נָא is paired with an imperative 15 times (1:24; 4:19; 7:3; 8:5; 9:2, 38; 10:15; 12:6; 13:4; 15:2; 16:28 [*bis*]; 18:5; 19:6, 8, 9).

4. נָא appears with a long imperative 3 times (16:6, 10; 19:11).

5. נָא is used with the cohortative 6 times (6:39; 11:17, 19; 13:15; 14:12; 19:24), always in conversation with another. Note that 11:17, 19 involve reported speech.

6. נָא is used with the third-person jussive twice (6:39; 13:8).

7. אַל־נָא is used with the second-person jussive twice (6:18; 19:23). Note that in 19:23 the phrase is split: אַל־תָּרֵעוּ נָא.

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[14] In v. 13, the Levite himself calls the group to stop: לְךָ וְנִקְרְבָה ... וְלַנּוּ (note the absence of נָא).

1 Samuel: Occurrences

2:36. Yhwh sends a man to Eli to deliver a message of judgment. Eli's family will be stripped of the priesthood and experience disaster. Those who are left will come to the priest Yhwh chooses and beg for a piece of silver or a loaf of bread, saying, ־סְפָחֵ֥נִי נָ֛א אֶל אַחַ֥ת הַכְּהֻנּ֖וֹת (IMPV., v. 36).

3:17. Yhwh speaks to Samuel one night regarding the judgment to befall Eli's family. The next morning, Eli summons Samuel and asks him what Yhwh's message was, impressing upon him, אַל־נָ֥א תְכַחֵ֖ד מִמֶּ֑נִּי (NEG. 2MS JUSS., v. 17), and uttering an imprecation should Samuel hold his tongue.

9:3. Some years later, a Benjaminite named Kish loses his donkeys and sends a servant and his son, Saul, after them: קַח־נָ֤א אִתְּךָ֙ אֶת־אַחַ֣ד מֵֽהַנְּעָרִ֔ים וְק֣וּם לֵ֔ךְ בַּקֵּ֖שׁ אֶת־הָאֲתֹנֹֽת (IMPV. + *waw*-impv. + impv. + impv., v. 3).

9:6. Saul and the servant arrive at Zuph, and Saul suggests they turn back (לְכָ֣ה וְנָשׁ֔וּבָה, long impv. + cohort., v. 5). But the servant points out (הִנֵּה־נָ֤א, PARTICLE, v. 6) that a man of God lives in the city and suggests they seek him out (עַתָּה֙ נֵ֣לְכָה שָּׁ֔ם, cohort., v. 6).

9:18. Saul, on his search for the donkeys, comes (unknowingly) to Samuel and asks, הַגִּֽידָה־נָּ֣א לִ֔י אֵי־זֶ֖ה בֵּ֥ית הָרֹאֶֽה (LONG IMPV., v. 18).

10:15. Having been anointed and commissioned by Samuel, Saul returns to Gibeah and meets up with his uncle. His uncle asks where he went, and Saul replies that he and the servant were with Samuel. The uncle then asks (הַגִּֽידָה־נָּ֣א לִ֔י, LONG IMPV., v. 15) what they found out. Saul tells of the donkeys but not of the matters regarding his upcoming role in the nation.

14:17. Jonathan and his armor bearer have snuck into a Philistine camp without his father's knowledge, and they are raising mayhem. Back at his camp, Saul's watchmen see the havoc, and Saul asks his men to find out (פִּקְדוּ־נָא וּרְאוּ, IMPV. + *waw*-impv., v. 17) who has gone missing.

14:29. When it is discovered that Jonathan has unknowingly broken the vow by tasting honey, he laments that his father's oath has brought trouble upon the land. The men should just see for themselves (רְאוּ־נָא, IMPV., v. 29) how just a little honey perked him up. It would have been better for the men to be allowed to eat some of what they had captured (v. 30).

15:25, 30. Samuel rebukes Saul for sparing the Amalekites and their goods and declares that Yhwh has rejected Saul as king. Saul confesses that he has sinned by fearing the people rather than Yhwh and makes a request: וְעַתָּה שָׂא נָא אֶת־חַטָּאתִי וְשׁוּב עִמִּי (IMPV. + *waw*-impv., v. 25). Samuel refuses to return with Saul, who grabs part of Samuel's garment and tears it as Samuel begins to walk away. Saul admits his sin again and pleads, עַתָּה כַּבְּדֵנִי נָא נֶגֶד זִקְנֵי עַמִּי ... וְשׁוּב עִמִּי (IMPV. + *waw*-impv., v. 30).

16:15, 16, 17, 22. Yhwh's spirit is removed from Saul and replaced with a destructive spirit. Saul's servants ask that he have them (הִנֵּה־נָא רוּחַ־אֱלֹהִים רָעָה מְבַעִתֶּךָ יֹאמַר־נָא אֲדֹנֵנוּ עֲבָדֶיךָ, PARTICLE + 3MS JUSS., vv. 15–16) fetch a musician to play soothing music for him. Saul agrees: רְאוּ־נָא לִי אִישׁ (IMPV., v. 17). David enters his service, and Saul comes to like him so much that he sends a message to Jesse, asking to keep David (יַעֲמָד־נָא דָוִד לְפָנָי, 3MS JUSS, v. 22).

17:17. While Saul and Israel are again engaged in active hostilities with the Philistines, David is at home, tending his father's sheep and bringing supplies to his

brothers on the battle field. One day Jesse says to him, קַח־נָא לְאַחֶיךָ ... וְהָרֵץ הַמַּחֲנֶה לְאַחֶיךָ (IMPV. + *waw*-impv. + וְאֵת ... תָּבִיא לְשַׂר־הָאָלֶף וְאֶת־אַחֶיךָ תִּפְקֹד לְשָׁלוֹם וְאֶת־עֲרֻבָתָם תִּקָּח modal yiqtol + modal yiqtol + modal yiqtol, vv. 17–18).

19:2. Saul has ordered Jonathan and the servants to kill David, and Jonathan tells David about the impending danger: וְעַתָּה הִשָּׁמֶר־נָא בַבֹּקֶר וְיָשַׁבְתָּ בַסֵּתֶר וְנַחְבֵּאתָ (IMPV. + wəqataltí + wəqataltí,[15] v. 2).

20:29 (*bis*). Saul celebrates the new moon festival and notices David's absence the first night but says nothing. On the second night, Saul asks Jonathan where David has been. Jonathan says that David fervently asked (נִשְׁאֹל נִשְׁאַל, v. 28) to be allowed to go to Bethlehem. Jonathan recalls David's request: שַׁלְּחֵנִי נָא ... אִם־מָצָאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ אִמָּלְטָה נָּא וְאֶרְאֶה אֶת־אֶחָי (reported speech[IMPV. + COHORT.], v. 29).

20:36. Jonathan becomes convinced at the festival that his father intends to follow through on his threats against David's life. As arranged, he heads out to a field the next morning, expecting David to be looking on from a hidden location, and shoots three arrows. Jonathan tells his servant, רֻץ מְצָא נָא אֶת־הַחִצִּים (impv. + IMPV., v. 36).

22:3. While hiding in the cave of Adullam, David finds himself amassing a small army of about 400 men, among them his own family. He heads to Moab, where he asks the king, יֵצֵא־נָא אָבִי וְאִמִּי אִתְּכֶם (3MS JUSS., v. 3).[16]

22:7, 12. Meanwhile, Saul hears that David's whereabouts are known, and he asks

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[15] Regarding וְנַחְבֵּאתָ, JM §43b notes that ל״א verbs in the wəqataltí tend to retain their qatal stress; see also Gotthelf Bergsträsser, *Hebräische Grammatik* (1918–29; repr., Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1986), vol. 2 §4d.

[16] BHS notes that יֵשֶׁב־נָא is attested in some rabbinical and medieval Jewish sources, as well as being read by the Syriac and Vulgate. Either way, a jussive is used with נָא.

his own men to listen up (שִׁמְעוּ־נָא, IMPV., v. 7): Has David promised to give them farmland or to make them commanders in his army? Is that why they have ganged up against Saul and sit idly by while his own son has turned against him?

One of the men, Doeg, reports that David is with Ahimelech at Nob. Saul addresses Ahimelech (שְׁמַע־נָא, IMPV., v. 12) and asks why he is plotting against Saul like this.

23:11. Saul heads to Keilah to attack David, so David consults with Yhwh. Is Saul really on his way? Will the people of Keilah hand David over to him? יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הַגֶּד־נָא לְעַבְדֶּךָ (IMPV., v. 11), he asks.

23:22. Later, David is hiding at Horesh, and his location is revealed by the Ziphites to Saul. Saul blesses them by Yhwh and tells them, ... לְכוּ־נָא הָכִינוּ עוֹד וּדְעוּ וּרְאוּ וּרְאוּ וּדְעוּ ... וְשַׁבְתֶּם אֵלַי (IMPV. + waw-impv. + waw-impv. + waw-impv. + waw-impv. + wəqataltí., vv. 22–23).

25:8. David sends some men to Nabal. They are to point out that they have not harmed Nabal's shepherds during their stay in the area and to give him the following request: וְיִמְצְאוּ הַנְּעָרִים חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ ... תְּנָה־נָא אֵת אֲשֶׁר תִּמְצָא יָדְךָ (IMPV., v. 8)

25:24, 25, 28. Nabal sends David's men back empty-handed, and David prepares to retaliate. Abigail, Nabal's wife, learns of the situation and quickly goes to meet David with victuals. She dismounts from her donkey, bows to the ground before him, and intercedes:

בִּי־אֲנִי אֲדֹנִי הֶעָוֹן וּתְדַבֶּר־נָא אֲמָתְךָ בְּאָזְנֶיךָ וּשְׁמַע אֵת דִּבְרֵי אֲמָתֶךָ אַל־נָא יָשִׂים אֲדֹנִי
אֶת־לִבּוֹ אֶל־אִישׁ הַבְּלִיַּעַל הַזֶּה ... שָׂא נָא לְפֶשַׁע אֲמָתֶךָ

(*waw*–3FS JUSS. + *waw*-impv. + NEG. 3MS JUSS.[17] + IMPV., vv. 24–28).

26:8, 11. David and Abishai sneak into Saul's camp one night and find Saul sleeping, with his spear next to him. Abishai tells David that God has delivered Saul into their hands, וְעַתָּה אַכֶּנּוּ נָא בַּחֲנִית (COHORT., v. 8). David counters that Saul will die in his own time, וְעַתָּה קַח־נָא אֶת־הַחֲנִית ... וְנֵלְכָה לָּנוּ (IMPV. + *waw*-cohort, v. 11).

26:19. A safe distance away, David calls to Saul's camp and wakens him. Saul begins a conversation, and David asks what evil he has committed that Saul should want to pursue him. He pleads with Saul (וְעַתָּה יִשְׁמַע־נָא אֲדֹנִי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֵת דִּבְרֵי עַבְדּוֹ, 3MS JUSS, v. 19) not to listen to men who may have incited him against David.

27:5. Later, David seeks refuge among the Philistines. One day David asks Achish, אִם־נָא מָצָאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ יִתְּנוּ־לִי מָקוֹם (PARTICLE + 3mp juss., v. 5).

28:8. Saul heads to Endor in disguise, to consult a medium at night. He asks her, קָסֳמִי־נָא לִי בָּאוֹב וְהַעֲלִי לִי אֵת אֲשֶׁר־אֹמַר אֵלָיִךְ (IMPV. + *waw*-impv., v. 8)

28:22. The medium conjures up Samuel himself, who delivers a message of judgment. Terrified, Saul faints, and the medium assists him. She has risked her life and heeded his request, and now he should listen to her and regain his strength: וְעַתָּה שְׁמַע־נָא נַם־אַתָּה בְּקוֹל שִׁפְחָתֶךָ ... פַּת־לֶחֶם וֶאֱכוֹל וִיהִי בְךָ כֹּחַ (IMPV. + impv. + *waw*-impv., v. 22).

30:7. The Philistines go out to do battle with Saul's army, but Achish makes David and his men return to Ziklag. Upon returning, David finds that the Amalekites have burned the town and carried off the inhabitants. Utterly distraught, he asks Abiathar to

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[17] One expects אַל־נָא יִשֵׁם. JM (§114g, note) considers this jussive by meaning as opposed to by form—a common distinction—but flags the form as potentially suspect without giving a reason. Gesenius-Kautzsch (§107p) notes that generally, the jussive after אַל does not differ from the yiqtol but then admits the possibility that some instances may be true imperfects.

bring him the ephod (הַגִּישָׁה־נָּא לִי הָאֵפֹד, LONG IMPV., v. 7).

1 Samuel: Statistics

1. הִנֵּה נָא is followed by a volitional with נָא once (16:15).

2. הִנֵּה נָא is followed by a volitional *without* נָא once (9:6, a cohortative).

3. אִם־נָא (in the phrase אִם־נָא מָצָאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ) is followed by an apodosis with a volitional *without* נָא once (27:5).

4. נָא is paired with an imperative 20 times (2:36; 9:3; 14:17, 29; 15:25, 30; 16:17; 17:17; 19:2; 20:29, 36; 22:7, 12; 23:11, 22; 25:8, 28; 26:11; 28:8, 22). In 20:36, נָא follows the *second* infinitive in a series (רֻץ מְצָא נָא). Note that 20:29 involves reported speech.

5. נָא appears with a long imperative 3 times (9:18; 10:15; 30:7).

6. נָא appears with the cohortative twice (20:29, 26:8). Note that 20:29 involves reported speech.

7. נָא is used with the third-person jussive 5 times (16:16, 22; 22:3; 25:25; 26:19), 1 of which involves negation with אַל־נָא.

8. אַל־נָא is used with the second-person jussive once (3:17).

9. נָא is paired with a *waw*-jussive form that begins a series of verbs once (25:24).

2 Samuel: Occurrences

1:4, 9. One of Saul's men comes and prostrates himself before David at Ziklag, who asks for an update on the battle with the Philistines: מֶה־הָיָה הַדָּבָר הַגֶּד־נָא לִי (IMPV., v. 4). The messenger reports that Jonathan is dead and that he himself, an Amalekite, helped Saul

take his own life (Saul's last words allegedly were עֲמָד־נָא עָלַי וּמֹתְתֵנִי, _{reported speech}[IMPV. + *waw*-impv.], v. 9) and now has brought the royal symbols to David.

2:14. Abner, the commander of Saul's army, installs Ish-bosheth and then brings his men to the pool of Gibeon to meet Joab, David's commander, along with his men. Abner asks Joab to have the soldiers get up (יָקוּמוּ נָא הַנְּעָרִים, 3MP JUSS., v. 14) and entertain them with some hand-to-hand. Joab agrees: יָקֻמוּ (3mp juss., v. 14).

7:2. After hostilities have subsided, David calls to Nathan's attention (רְאֵה נָא, IMPV., v. 2) the fact that he lives in a dwelling with cedar walls but the ark of God is housed within a fabric tent. Nathan tells David to proceed with his plan (לֵךְ עֲשֵׂה, impv. + impv., v. 3).

13:5. Amnon pines for his half-sister, Tamar. His friend comes up with a plan that might induce David to send over Tamar (שְׁכַב עַל־מִשְׁכָּבְךָ וְהִתְחָל ... וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו תָּבֹא נָא תָמָר אֲחוֹתִי, impv. + *waw*-impv. + wəqataltí + _{reported speech}[3FS JUSS], v. 5) so that she might prepare some food in his presence.

13:6, 7. Amnon follows the advice (using תָּבוֹא־נָא, 2 FS JUSS., v. 6), and David summons Tamar to go to Amnon's house and prepare him a meal (לְכִי נָא ... וַעֲשִׂי־לוֹ הַבִּרְיָה, IMPV. + *waw*-impv., v. 7).

13:13, 17. Amnon forces himself upon Tamar, who pleads with him not to rape her; it would be less shameful for her if he simply asked David: וְעַתָּה דַּבֶּר־נָא אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ כִּי לֹא יִמְנָעֵנִי מִמֶּךָ (IMPV., v. 13). But Amnon rapes her and then immediately begins to hate her, such that his hatred exceeds his previously intense desire for her. He tells her to get out (קוּמִי לֵכִי, impv. + impv., v. 15), and she counters that sending her away now would be

an even worse act. But he calls his servant to throw her out and bar the door: שִׁלְחוּ־נָא אֶת־

זֹאת מֵעָלַי הַחוּצָה וּנְעֹל הַדֶּלֶת אַחֲרֶיהָ (IMPV. + *waw*-impv., v. 17).

13:24 (*bis*), 25, 26. Two years after his sister's rape, Absalom invites David and

the king's sons to a sheepshearing: הִנֵּה־נָא גֹזְזִים לְעַבְדֶּךָ יֵלֶךְ־נָא הַמֶּלֶךְ וַעֲבָדָיו עִם־עַבְדֶּךָ

(PARTICLE + 3MS JUSS, v. 24). But the king passes: אַל־בְּנִי אַל־נָא נֵלֵךְ כֻּלָּנוּ (NEG.

COHORT., v. 25). Absalom then suggests his fiendish alternative: יֵלֶךְ־נָא אִתָּנוּ אַמְנוֹן אָחִי

(3MS JUSS., v. 26).

13:28. David consents to Absalom's second option, so Absalom tells his servants

to prepare for vengeance: "Here's the plan: you be on the lookout [רְאוּ נָא, IMPV. v. 28]"

for when Amnon has an alcohol buzz, and then mercilessly kill him.

14:2 (*bis*). After Amnon's murder, Absalom escapes to Geshur. Joab sees that

David longs to be reunited with Absalom, and hatches a plan to reconcile the two. Joab

fetches a wise woman from Tekoa and instructs her, הִתְאַבְּלִי־נָא וְלִבְשִׁי־נָא בִגְדֵי־אֵבֶל וְאַל־

תָּסוּכִי שֶׁמֶן וְהָיִית ... וּבָאת אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ וְדִבַּרְתְּ אֵלָיו (IMPV. + *waw*-IMPV. + *waw*–neg. 2fs juss.

+ wəqaltí + wəqaltí + wəqaltí, vv. 2–3).

14:11, 12, 15, 17, 18 (*bis*). The woman comes to the king, falls prostrate before

him, and implores him (הוֹשִׁעָה הַמֶּלֶךְ, impv., v. 4). She tells David of her two sons, one of

whom has killed the other, and of how the clan demands that the fratricide be turned over

to be killed, potentially leaving her without an immediate male family member. David

instructs her to return home (לְכִי לְבֵיתֵךְ, v. 8), and he will issue his decision.

Perhaps to keep the discussion from ending prematurely,[18] the woman declares

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[18] David G. Firth, *1 & 2 Samuel* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 445.

that the king will be innocent and any guilt will fall upon her family. David states that any troublemakers should be brought to him.

Again, possibly seeing the need to keep the conversation going,[19] the woman presses the king for action then and there: יִזְכָּר־נָא הַמֶּ֫לֶךְ אֶת־יְהוָה (3MS JUSS., v. 11). The king declares that the fratricide's life must be spared.

The trap has sprung, and the woman asks to speak further (תְּדַבֶּר־נָא שִׁפְחָתְךָ אֶל־אֲדֹנִי הַמֶּ֫לֶךְ דָּבָר, 3FS JUSS., v. 12). David grants her request (דַּבֵּ֫רִי, impv., v. 12), and she points out that David has convicted himself by allowing his own son to remain banished. She falls back upon the invented story: she came to David for help out of fear of her family, thinking, אֲדַבְּרָה־נָּא אֶל־הַמֶּ֫לֶךְ (reported speech[COHORT.], v. 15), and hoping that the king would not allow an avenger to leave a widow without a male son. She had said to herself, יִהְיֶה־נָא דְבַר־אֲדֹנִי הַמֶּ֫לֶךְ לִמְנוּחָה (reported speech[3MS JUSS.][20], v. 17); after all, the king is like Yhwh's own messenger in knowing what is right and what is wrong.

David's eyes open, and he asks her for an honest answer to the question to follow (אַל־נָא תְכַחֲדִי מִמֶּ֫נִּי דָּבָר, NEG. 2FS JUSS., v. 18). The woman invites him to proceed (יְדַבֶּר־נָא אֲדֹנִי הַמֶּ֫לֶךְ, 3MS JUSS, v. 18) and, when asked, confesses that Joab put her up to this, though with good intentions.

14:21. David gives Joab orders to bring back Absalom: הִנֵּה־נָא עָשִׂ֫יתִי אֶת־הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה וְלֵךְ הָשֵׁב אֶת־הַנַּ֫עַר אֶת־אַבְשָׁלוֹם (PARTICLE + waw-impv. + impv., v. 21).

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[19] Firth, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 445.

[20] The expected form is יְהִי, which occurs later in the same verse, and *BHS* notes that a few manuscripts do indeed have יהי. Gotthelf Bergsträsser (*Hebräische Grammatik* [1918–29; repr.; Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1986], vol. 2, §30b) cites this as one example among many in which the jussive of III-ה verbs is identical to the fuller yiqtol form. Cf. LXX εἴη δή.

15:7. Absalom returns to Jerusalem and, after a number of years, asks David to let him go (אֵלְכָה נָּא, COHORT, v. 7) to Hebron to fulfill a vow made to Yhwh. David gives him leave: לֵךְ בְּשָׁלוֹם (impv., v. 9).

15:31. Absalom's rebellion forces David to flee Jerusalem. He walks up the Mount of Olives barefoot, weeping and head covered. When the people tell him that his counselor Ahithophel is part of the conspiracy, David prays, סַכֶּל־נָא אֶת־עֲצַת אֲחִיתֹפֶל יְהוָה (IMPV., v. 31).

16:9. While on the run from Absalom, David runs into a relative of Saul named Shimei, who hurls stones and curses at him: צֵא צֵא אִישׁ הַדָּמִים וְאִישׁ הַבְּלִיָּעַל (impv. + impv., v. 7). Abishai asks the king permission to go over (אֶעְבְּרָה־נָּא, COHORT, v. 9) to decapitate him.

17:1, 5. In Jerusalem, David's counselor Ahithophel asks Absalom to let him gather a small army (אֶבְחֲרָה נָּא שְׁנֵים־עָשָׂר אֶלֶף אִישׁ, COHORT., v. 1) to go after David. He need only take care of one man, and all the others will return. Absalom suggests they summon Hushai (קְרָא נָא גַּם לְחוּשַׁי הָאַרְכִּי, IMPV., v. 5) for a second opinion.

18:19, 22. Joab kills Absalom during hostilities, and Ahimaaz asks permission to run (אָרוּצָא נָּא, COHORT., v. 19) to tell David the news. Joab tells him not to go and sends a Cushite instead (לֵךְ הַגֵּד לַמֶּלֶךְ, impv. + impv., v. 21). Ahimaaz repeats his request (אָרֻצָה־נָּא גַם־אָנִי, COHORT., vv. 22).

19:38. As he returns to Jerusalem, David meets Barzillai and asks him to accompany him into the city (אַתָּה עֲבֹר אִתִּי, impv., v. 34). Barzillai counters that he is too old and would be a burden to the king; however, he will walk with the king a short distance, just over the Jordan, after which he asks that he be allowed to return home and

that his servant Kimcham accompany the king into the city: יֵשֶׁב־נָא עַבְדְּךָ ... וְהִנֵּה עַבְדְּךָ

כִמְהָם יַעֲבֹר עִם־אֲדֹנִי הַמֶּלֶךְ וַעֲשֵׂה־לוֹ אֵת אֲשֶׁר־טוֹב בְּעֵינֶיךָ (3MS JUSS. + presentation particle + 3ms juss. + *waw*-impv., v. 38).

20:16. A man from the tribe of Benjamin, Sheba, leads a rebellion of the northern tribes against David. Joab leads David's men to Abel of Beth-maacah, where Sheba is holed up, and they begin destroying the city wall. A woman calls down to the men: שִׁמְעוּ

שִׁמְעוּ אִמְרוּ־נָא אֶל־יוֹאָב קְרַב עַד־הֵנָּה (addressed to men[impv. + impv. + IMPV.] + addressed to Joab[impv.], v. 16). Joab comes to the wall, and she asks, שְׁמַע דִּבְרֵי אֲמָתֶךָ (impv., v. 17).

24:2. A manifestation of Yhwh's anger prompts David to order a census (לֵךְ מְנֵה

שׁוּם־נָא בְּכָל־שִׁבְטֵי אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶת־יְהוּדָה, impv. + impv., v. 1). David gives orders to Joab: שׁוּם־נָא בְּכָל־שִׁבְטֵי

יִשְׂרָאֵל ... וּפִקְדוּ אֶת־הָעָם (IMPV. + *waw*-impv., v. 2).

24:10, 14. After the census, David is convicted of his sinned and confesses to Yhwh. He asks for forgiveness: וְעַתָּה יְהוָה הַעֲבֶר־נָא אֶת־עֲוֹן עַבְדְּךָ (IMPV., v. 10). The prophet Gad comes to David the next morning, with three choices from Yhwh. David takes the third option, saying, צַר־לִי מְאֹד נִפְּלָה־נָא בְיַד־יְהוָה ... וּבְיַד־אָדָם אַל־אֶפֹּלָה (COHORT. + neg. cohort., v. 14).

24:17. David has chosen a three-day plague from Yhwh, and 70,000 men perish before the destroyer sent from Yhwh concludes striking Israel, at the threshing floor of Araunah. David sees the angel of destruction and pleads with Yhwh: this was David's sin, not the people's, and Yhwh should punish David's family (תְּהִי נָא יָדְךָ בִּי וּבְבֵית אָבִי, 3FS JUSS., v. 17).

2 Samuel: Statistics

1. הִנֵּה נָא is followed by a volitional with נָא once (13:24).

2. הִנֵּה נָא is followed by a volitional *without* נָא once (14:21, two imperatives, the first with *waw* functioning ecbatically: "and so," "since this is the case").

3. נָא is paired with an imperative 14 times (1:4, 9; 7:2; 13:7, 13, 17, 28; 14:2 [*bis*]; 15:31; 17:5; 19:38; 20:16; 24:2, 10). Note that 1:9 is an instance of reported speech. In 20:16, the imperative with נָא is not the first in the series (שִׁמְעוּ שִׁמְעוּ אִמְרִי־נָא אֶל־יוֹאָב); however, אִמְרִי is the primary imperative (and hence is used with נָא), whereas שִׁמְעוּ שִׁמְעוּ serves merely to get attention ("Hey! Hey!").

4. נָא is used with the cohortative 8 times (13:25; 14:15; 15:7; 16:9; 17:1; 18:19, 22; 24:14). Note that 14:15, 17 is an instance of reported speech.

5. נָא is used with the third-person jussive 10 times (2:14; 13:5, 24, 26; 14:11, 12, 17, 18; 19:38; 24:17). Reported speech is indicated in 14:17. 1 of which involves negation with אַל־נָא.[21]

6. אַל־נָא is used with the second-person jussive in 14:18.

1 Kings: Occurrences

1:12. David is old and feeble, and his son Adonijah proclaims himself the rightful heir to the throne. Nathan, realizing that David is unaware of what has happened, approaches Bathsheba and suggests a plan to involve him: וְעַתָּה לְכִי אִיעָצֵךְ נָא עֵצָה ... לְכִי וּבֹאִי אֶל־ הַמֶּלֶךְ דָּוִד וְאָמַרְתְּ אֵלָיו (impv. + COHORT.; impv. + *waw*-impv. + wəqataltí, vv. 12–13).

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[21] Note that 13:5 is an instance of reported speech; in 13:6 that reported speech (including the jussive with נָא) is actually uttered.

2:17. David declares Solomon his heir, and Solomon is coronated. After David's death, Adonijah comes to Bathsheba with a request that she should not refuse (אַל־תָּשִׁבִי אֶת־פָּנָי, neg. 2ms juss., v. 16). Bathsheba agrees (דַּבֵּר, impv., v. 16), and Adonijah requests that she ask (אִמְרִי־נָא, IMPV., v. 17) Solomon to give him Abishag as his wife.[22]

8:26. Several chapters later, Solomon has built a temple and dedicates it to Yhwh. In his prayer he notes the uniqueness and faithfulness of Yhwh, who has promised to preserve the Davidic throne as long as obedient men sit on it. Solomon claims this promise, so to speak: וְעַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁמֹר לְעַבְדְּךָ דָוִד אָבִי אֵת אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ לּוֹ ... וְעַתָּה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יֵאָמֶן נָא דְּבָרְךָ (impv.; 3MS JUSS, vv. 25–26).

13:6. After Solomon's death, the kingdom divides. One day, while Jeroboam is at the altar in Bethel, a man of God comes to curse the altar. When Jeroboam orders that he be arrested (תִּפְשֻׂהוּ, impv., v. 4), Jeroboam's hand seizes up and the altar falls apart, in fulfillment of the curse. Jeroboam asks the man of God to pray for him: חַל־נָא אֶת־פְּנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְהִתְפַּלֵּל בַּעֲדִי, IMPV. + *waw*-impv., v. 6). Jeroboam's hand is restored, and he invites the man to come back to his residence: בֹּאָה־אִתִּי הַבַּיְתָה וּסְעָדָה (long impv. + *waw*–long impv., v. 7).

14:2. After the gruesome death of the man of God, Jeroboam continues in his wicked ways. One day his son Abijah becomes sick. Jeroboam asks his wife to disguise herself, gather up some food gifts, and go to a prophet in Shiloh (... קוּמִי נָא וְהִשְׁתַּנִּית וְהָלַכְתְּ שִׁלֹה ... וְלָקַחַתְּ ... וּבָאת אֵלָיו, IMPV. + wəqataltí + wəqataltí + wəqataltí + wəqataltí,

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[22] In the conversation that follows, Bathsheba asks Solomon not to refuse her request (אַל־תָּשֵׁב אֶת־פָּנָי, neg. 2fs juss., v. 20). Solomon invites her to proceed (שַׁאֲלִי אִמִּי, impv., v. 20), and Bathsheba presents Adonijah's request as a suggestion (יֻתַּן אֶת־אֲבִישַׁג ... לַאֲדֹנִיָּהוּ, 3ms passive juss., v. 21). The particle **נָא** is not used by either speaker.

vv. 2–3).

17:10, 11. Elijah goes to visit a widow in Zarephath and asks her for some water (קְחִי־נָא לִי מְעַט־מַיִם, IMPV., v. 10). She leaves to get him a drink, and Elijah calls out, לִקְחִי־נָא פַת־לֶחֶם (IMPV., v. 11). She says she has nothing and that she and her son are preparing to make their final meal and then starve. Elijah tells her not to worry but to make him something to eat anyway (אַל־תִּירְאִי בֹּאִי עֲשִׂי כִדְבָרֵךְ אַךְ עֲשִׂי־לִי מִשָּׁם עֻגָה קְטַנָּה בָרִאשֹׁנָה וְהוֹצֵאת לִי (neg. 2fs juss. + impv. + impv. + impv. + wəqataltí, v. 13), for her flour and oil will not run out until Yhwh ends the ongoing drought.

17:21. After this, the widow's son takes ill and dies. She asks Elijah why he has come to punish her for her sin in this manner. He asks for her son (תְּנִי־לִי אֶת־בְּנֵךְ, impv., v. 19) and takes the body to the guestroom, where he pleads with Yhwh: יְהוָה אֱלֹהָי תָּשָׁב נָא נֶפֶשׁ־הַיֶּלֶד הַזֶּה עַל־קִרְבּוֹ (3FS JUSS., v. 21).

18:43. After he defeats the prophets of Baal and has them slain at Mount Carmel, Elijah tells Ahab, עֲלֵה אֱכֹל וּשְׁתֵה (impv. + impv. + *waw*-impv., v. 41). Ahab goes off, but Elijah climbs higher up the mountain. He asks his servant to go farther up and look in the direction of the sea (עֲלֵה־נָא הַבֵּט דֶּרֶךְ־יָם, IMPV. + impv., v. 43). The servant returns, having seen nothing, and Elijah tells him to go back up (שֻׁב, impv., v. 43)—seven times. Finally, the servant reports that he has seen a very small cloud. Elijah sends him to Ahab: עֲלֵה אֱמֹר אֶל־אַחְאָב (impv. + impv., v. 44).

19:20. Elijah finds Elisha at the plow and, running past, throws his cloak on Elisha. Elisha catches up to him and asks to be allowed to say goodbye to his parents before following him: אֶשְּׁקָה־נָא לְאָבִי וּלְאִמִּי (COHORT., v. 20).

20:7. Ben-hadad attacks Samaria and informs Ahab that he will send servants to plunder Ahab's wealth, wives, and children. Ahab summons the city elders and asks them to just look (דְּעוּ־נָא וּרְאוּ, IMPV. + *waw*-impv., v. 7) at what Ben-hadad is up to. The elders tell him to resist (אַל־תִּשְׁמַע וְלוֹא תֹאבֶה, neg. 2ms juss. + *waw*–neg. yiqtol, v. 8).

20:31 (*bis*), 32. Ben-hadad engages Israel in battle at Aphek and suffers defeat. He hides himself in the city while his men consider among themselves (הִנֵּה־נָא, PARTICLE, v. 31) a rumor that the Israelites are merciful. They decide to clothe with sackcloth and ropes and surrender to the king (נָשִׂימָה נָּא שַׂקִּים בְּמָתְנֵינוּ וַחֲבָלִים בְּרֹאשֵׁנוּ וְנֵצֵא אֶל־מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל, COHORT. + *waw*-cohort, v. 31). They come out of the city and claim to bring a message of surrender from Ben-hadad: עַבְדְּךָ בֶן־הֲדַד אָמַר תְּחִי־נָא נַפְשִׁי (reported speech[3FS JUSS.], v. 32). The king receives them favorably and tells them to fetch Ben-hadad (בֹּאוּ קָחֻהוּ, impv. + impv., v. 33).

20:35. Ahab releases Ben-hadad after making a covenant. Yhwh, displeased with this arrangement, commands an unnamed prophet, who asks another to wound him (הַכֵּינִי נָא, IMPV., v. 35).

20:37. Refused by the first person, the unnamed prophet petitions another (הַכֵּינִי נָא, IMPV., v. 37). The second person complies, and the prophet goes off to bring Ahab a message of condemnation from Yhwh.

22:5. Ahab asks Jehoshaphat to join with him in battle against Syria. Jehoshaphat replies that they really should consult Yhwh first (דְּרָשׁ־נָא כַיּוֹם אֶת־דְּבַר יְהוָה, IMPV., v. 5). Ahab's prophets declare impending victory, but Jehoshaphat asks for a second opinion. Ahab says there is one other prophet they could ask, but Ahab hates him, for he

prophesies only failure. Jehoshaphat counters that Ahab shouldn't say such things: ־אַל

יֹאמַר הַמֶּלֶךְ כֵּן (neg. 3ms juss., v. 8).

22:13 (*bis*). Ahab sends a messenger to fetch Micaiah, the obstinate prophet. The

messenger points out to Micaiah (הִנֵּה־נָא, PARTICLE, v. 13) that all the others'

predictions have been favorable and that he should go along with them: יְהִי נָא דְבָרְךָ

כִּדְבַר אַחַד מֵהֶם וְדִבַּרְתָּ טּוֹב (3MS JUSS. + wəqataltí,[23] v. 13).

1 Kings: Statistics

1. הִנֵּה נָא is followed by a volitional with נָא twice (20:31; 22:13).

2. נָא is paired with an imperative 10 times (2:17; 13:6; 14:2; 17:10, 11; 18:43; 20:7,

    35, 37; 22:5).

3. נָא is used with the cohortative 3 times (1:12; 19:20; 20:31). In 1:12, the

    cohortative with נָא is the second in a series of volitional forms (וְעַתָּה לְכִי אִיעָצֵךְ נָא

    עֵצָה).

4. נָא is used with the jussive 4 times (8:26; 17:21; 20:32; 22:13), 1 of which (20:32)

    is an instance of reported speech.

2 Kings: Occurrences

1:13. Ahaziah injures himself in an accident and sends messengers to consult Baal-zebub.

Yhwh sends Elijah to intercept the messengers with his own oracle for Ahaziah. The king

dispatches a unit of fifty troops, and the commander tells Elijah, אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים הַמֶּלֶךְ דִּבֶּר

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[23] The stress on וְדִבַּרְתָּ is not typical for a wəqataltí, but the context suggests (logical) succession ("Let your words conform, and so speak well"), so the parsing here follows the function; cf. Gesenius-Kautzsch §112q and JM §119i, k.

רֵ֖ד (reported speech[long impv.], v. 9). Elijah calls down fire from the sky and destroys the unit. King Ahaziah sends fifty more troops, and their commander tells Elijah, אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים כֹּה־אָמַר הַמֶּ֫לֶךְ מְהֵרָה רֵ֖דָה (reported speech[long impv.], v. 11). Again Elijah wipes out the group. Ahaziah sends yet another unit of fifty, and the commander tells Elijah, אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים תִּֽיקַר־נָא נַפְשִׁי וְנֶ֫פֶשׁ עֲבָדֶ֫יךָ אֵ֫לֶּה (3FS JUSS., v. 13).

2:2, 4, 6. The time for Elijah's assumption comes. As the two are walking, Elijah asks Elisha to stay behind (שֵֽׁב־נָא פֹּה, IMPV., v. 2) while he goes on to Bethel, but Elisha refuses to leave him. At Bethel, Elijah again asks Elisha to stay behind (אֱלִישָׁע שֵֽׁב־נָא פֹה, IMPV., v. 4) while he continues to Jericho, but again Elisha swears that he will remain with him. A third time, Elijah asks Elisha to stay (שֵֽׁב־נָא פֹה, IMPV., v. 6) while he heads to the Jordan.

2:9. The two cross the Jordan, and Elijah offers to grant Elisha a request (שְׁאַל מָה אֶֽעֱשֶׂה־לָּךְ, impv., v. 9). Elisha asks to be given double of Elijah's spirit (וִֽיהִי־נָא פִּי שְׁנַ֫יִם בְּרוּחֲךָ אֵלָ֑י, *waw*–3MS JUSS. / INDIRECT 3MS JUSS., v. 9).

2:16 (*bis*). Elijah is taken, and Elisha makes his way back. At Jericho the sons of the prophets approach him and point out (הִנֵּה־נָא, PARTICLE, v. 16) that there are fifty of them, so they ask to be allowed to spread out (יֵלְכוּ נָא, 3MP JUSS., v. 16) to look for Elijah.

2:19. One day, the locals come to Elisha and raise the issue (הִנֵּה־נָא, PARTICLE, v. 19) of the poor quality of the water and land.

4:9, 10. A family in Shunem befriends Elisha and provides him a meal whenever he stops by. The wife points out to her husband (הִנֵּה־נָא, PARTICLE, v. 9) that Elisha is a

holy man of Yhwh, and suggests they prepare (נַעֲשֶׂה־נָּא, COHORT., v. 10) furnished quarters for him to lodge when he visits.

4:13. On one such visit, he suggests that his servant Gehazi ask her (אֱמָר־נָא אֵלֶיהָ, IMPV., v. 13) how he might repay the kindness. Gehazi notes that she and her husband are old and childless. Elisha asks Gehazi to summon her (קְרָא־לָהּ, impv., v. 15) to the room and declares that in a year she will have a son.

4:22. A few years later, the son dies. The wife asks her husband for a servant and a donkey so that she can make a round-trip visit to Elisha (שִׁלְחָה נָא לִי, IMPV., v. 22). She saddles the donkey and tells her servant to drive the animal on at a good clip: נְהַג וָלֵךְ אַל־ תַּעֲצָר־לִי לִרְכֹּב (impv. + *waw*-impv. + neg. 2ms juss., v. 24).

4:26. Elisha sees her coming and sends his servant to meet her (הִנֵּה הַשּׁוּנַמִּית הַלָּז עַתָּה רוּץ־נָא לִקְרָאתָהּ וֶאֱמָר־לָהּ, presentation particle + IMPV. + *waw*-impv., vv. 25–26). Gehazi attempts to push her away as she grabs hold of Elisha's feet, but Elisha stops him: הַרְפֵּה־לָהּ (impv., v. 27). When she tells Elisha of her dead son, he gives Gehazi his staff and tells him to hurry off and lay the staff on the child's face (חֲגֹר מָתְנֶיךָ וְקַח מִשְׁעַנְתִּי בְיָדְךָ וָלֵךְ כִּי־תִמְצָא אִישׁ לֹא תְבָרְכֶנּוּ וְכִי־יְבָרֶכְךָ אִישׁ לֹא תַעֲנֶנּוּ וְשַׂמְתָּ מִשְׁעַנְתִּי עַל־פְּנֵי הַנָּעַר, impv. + *waw*-impv. + waw-impv. + yiqtol [protasis] + neg. modal yiqtol [apodosis] + yiqtol [protasis] + neg. modal yiqtol [apodosis] + wəqataltí, v. 29).

5:7. Naaman, the commander of the Syrian military, comes to Israel's king with gold, silver, garments, and a letter from the Syrian king—asking that his leprosy be cured. Israel's king rends his clothes and laments that Syria just wants to pick a fight with

him: כִּי אַךְ־דְּעוּ־נָא וּרְאוּ כִּי־מִתְאַנֶּה הוּא לִי (IMPV. + *waw*-impv., v. 7).[24]

5:8. Elisha asks the king to send Naaman to him: לָמָּה קָרַעְתָּ בְּגָדֶיךָ יָבֹא־נָא אֵלַי (3MS JUSS., v. 8).

5:15 (*bis*), 17. Healed, Naaman returns to Elisha, professes exclusive faith in Israel's God (הִנֵּה־נָא יָדַעְתִּי כִּי אֵין אֱלֹהִים בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ כִּי אִם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל, PARTICLE, v. 15), and offers a gift: וְעַתָּה קַח־נָא בְרָכָה מֵאֵת עַבְדֶּךָ (IMPV., v. 15). Elisha refuses, and Naaman asks that he be given (יֻתַּן־נָא לְעַבְדְּךָ, 3MS PASS. JUSS, v. 17) some soil from Israel.

5:22. Gehazi follows after Naaman to claim the gift himself. He tells Naaman that Elisha has just received guests and requests for them (תְּנָה־נָּא לָהֶם, reported speech[LONG IMPV.], v. 22) money and clothing. Naaman gladly grants the wish (הוֹאֶל קַח, impv. + impv., v. 23).

6:1, 2, 3. One day, the sons of the prophets point out (הִנֵּה־נָא, PARTICLE, v. 1) to Elisha that their quarters are cramped and ask to go (נֵלְכָה־נָּא, COHORT., v. 2) to the Jordan fetch some wood and build new quarters. Elisha answers, לֵכוּ (impv., v. 2), and is invited by the prophets to accompany them (הוֹאֶל נָא וְלֵךְ אֶת־עֲבָדֶיךָ, IMPV. + *waw*-impv., v. 3).

6:17, 18. The king of Syria sends a regiment of armed cavalry to seize Elisha. Elisha's servant panics at the sight of the soldiers approaching, but Elisha counsels him not to fear (אַל־תִּירָא, neg. 2ms juss., v. 16), for those with them are greater than those with the enemy. Elisha then asks Yhwh to open (פְּקַח־נָא, IMPV., v. 17) the servant's eyes so he will see Yhwh's fiery cavalry. As the Syrians fall upon him, Elisha asks Yhwh to

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[24] The text does not indicate to whom this is addressed. If it is not a soliloquy, advisors or servants likely were present.

strike (הַךְ־נָא, IMPV., v. 18) the soldiers with blindness. Elisha cleverly leads the soldiers to Samaria, to hand them over to the king of Israel; once they arrive at the city, Elisha tells Yhwh it is time to open (פְּקַח, impv., v. 20) their eyes.

7:12, 13. Some time later, Ben-hadad lays siege to Samaria. Yhwh routs the attackers, but when word reaches the palace that the Arameans have fled, the king is incredulous. He replies to his servants, אַגִּידָה־נָּא לָכֶם אֵת אֲשֶׁר־עָשׂוּ לָנוּ אֲרָם (COHORT., v. 12): it's a trick to draw the starving citizens of Samaria out of the city, leaving it undefended and vulnerable. A servant suggests that some men be allowed to take (וְיִקְחוּ־נָא, *waw*–3MS JUSS. / INDIRECT 3MS JUSS., v. 13) horses and go out to investigate.

8:4. Elisha warns the woman from Shunem (cf. chapter 4) of an impending seven-year famine, and her family leaves to sojourn in Philistia. When they return, she goes to the king to ask that her house and land be returned. The king is in conversation with Gehazi at the moment, asking him to recount for him (סַפְּרָה־נָּא לִי, LONG IMPV., v. 4) Elisha's achievements. As Gehazi is telling him of Elisha's bringing the dead back to life, who should arrive but the woman and her revived son.

9:12. Elisha sends one of the sons of the prophets to anoint Jehu king of Israel and then race off. The young man comes to Ramoth-gilead, calls Jehu out of a meeting, anoints him at his home, and then flees out the door. When Jehu comes out, his superior's servants ask him what the nut job (הַמְשֻׁגָּע הַזֶּה, v. 11) was up to and whether Jehu is okay. Jehu dismisses the incident as inconsequential, but the servants press him: שֶׁקֶר הַגֶּד־נָא לָנוּ (IMPV., v. 12).

9:34. Jehu goes on a killing spree, executing Yhwh's judgment on the house of Ahab. Having knocked off not just Joram but also Ahaziah (for supporting Joram, v. 23),

he heads for Jezebel's residence. A few eunuchs signal to him their support, and he tells them to drop her out a window (שִׁמְטוּהָ [qere], impv., v. 33). They do so, and in case she survived the fall, she is trampled. Jehu enters her residence to make merry and gives instructions to attend to the accursed woman and to give her a proper burial (פִּקְדוּ־נָא אֶת־ הָאֲרוּרָה הַזֹּאת וְקִבְרוּהָ, IMPV., v. 34)—she was a queen, after all.

18:19, 23, 26. Sennacherib sends envoys to Jerusalem. When a group of Hezekiah's administrators go out to meet the Assyrians, they are instructed to tell the king (אִמְרוּ־נָא אֶל־חִזְקִיָּהוּ, IMPV., v. 19) that neither Egypt nor Yhwh can offer Judah protection, so he should enter into an arrangement with Sennacherib (וְעַתָּה הִתְעָרֶב נָא אֶת־ אֲדֹנִי אֶת־מֶלֶךְ אַשּׁוּר, IMPV., v. 23). Hezekiah's administrators ask that the Assyrian delegate speak with them (דַּבֶּר־נָא אֶל־עֲבָדֶיךָ, IMPV., v. 26) in Aramaic while in earshot of the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

19:19. Perhaps not long thereafter, another group of Assyrian messengers come to Jerusalem with a message from a member of the first group. Hezekiah really shouldn't fool himself (אַל־יַשִּׁאֲךָ, neg. 2ms juss., v. 10), for Yhwh will not deliver him from Sennacherib's army. Upon receiving the message, Hezekiah goes to the temple and prays, asking Yhwh to pay attention to the Assyrians' message (הַטֵּה יְהוָה אָזְנְךָ וּשֲׁמָע פְּקַח יְהוָה עֵינֶיךָ וּרְאֵה וּשְׁמַע אֵת דִּבְרֵי סַנְחֵרִיב, impv. + *waw*-impv. + impv. + *waw*-impv. + *waw*-impv., v. 16). The Assyrians are a powerful force and have destroyed nations, their lands, and their idols. The threat is real, and Hezekiah prays for deliverance (וְעַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ הוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ נָא, IMPV., v. 19) so that the nations will know that Yhwh alone is the true God.

20:3. An account is given of an illness that Hezekiah once had. At death's door

and told that he will not survive, in tears he pleads with Yhwh to remember (זְכָר־נָא, IMPV., v. 3) his devotion and good works.

2 Kings: Statistics

1. הִנֵּה נָא is followed by a volitional with נָא 4 times (2:16; 4:9; 5:15; 6:1).

2. הִנֵּה נָא is *not* followed by a volitional with נָא once (2:19; the utterance is a factual statement).

3. נָא is paired with an imperative 18 times (2:2, 4, 6; 4:13, 22, 26; 5:7, 15; 6:3, 17, 18; 9:12, 34; 18:19, 23, 26; 19:19; 20:3).

4. נָא appears with a long imperative twice (5:22; 8:4). Note that 5:22 is an instance of reported speech.

5. נָא appears with the cohortative three times (4:10; 6:2; 7:12).

6. נָא is used with the jussive 6 times (1:13; 2:9, 16; 5:8, 17; 7:13). Both 2:9 and 7:13 involve a *waw*-jussive (or indirect jussive?) form that is not in series with a preceding verbal form; the function of *waw* in these instances is not clear.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS OF THE USE OF נָא IN THE TORAH AND FORMER PROPHETS

An analysis of the uses of נָא listed in the previous chapter will now be presented.

The Expression הִנֵּה נָא

The expression הִנֵּה נָא (or הִנֵּה־נָא or הִנֵּה־נָא; there is no readily apparent difference in

meaning) appears in two constructions in the corpus. In the first construction, attested 16

times, הִנֵּה נָא introduces a clause that is followed immediately by a request-clause

containing a volitional form with נָא. In these instances, הִנֵּה נָא calls attention to a

situation or state of affairs that forms the basis for the petition made with the volitional.

The very first attestation, Gen 12:11–13, is a model example: Abram points out to his

wife (הִנֵּה־נָא) that she is beautiful and that the Egyptians will kill him in order to add her

to the pharaoh's harem. In light of this, Abram asks her (אִמְרִי־נָא) to tell the Egyptians

that she is Abram's sister. The particle הִנֵּה, by itself, is often used to point out a state of

affairs, and since in this corpus הִנֵּה (without נָא) never functions thus with a volitional

paired with נָא, it is likely that הִנֵּה נָא is a conditioned variant.

In one instance (Gen 19:2), הִנֵּה נָא is paired with a volitional with נָא, but it

functions as a vocative or attention-getting interjection. Lot flags down the men to ask

them to stay, and הִנֵּה נָא thus anticipates a request—"anticipatory" might be the best way

94

to describe the expression and might explain why הִנֵּה can appear with volitionals with נָא

(e.g., Judg 19:24). In these cases, הִנֵּה calls attention to the presence of a person or object,

but perhaps that is not felt by the speaker to anticipate the request that follows.

Twice, הִנֵּה נָא introduces a clause that is followed immediately by a clause

containing a volitional form *without* נָא.[1] The first instance is 1 Sam 9:6; based on the

conclusion just stated, one would expect to find נֵלֲכָה־נָּא.[2] The second instance is 2 Sam

14:21 (one expects וְלֵךְ־נָא). In both instances, the הִנֵּה נָא clause introduces a situation in

anticipation of a request (made all the clearer with עַתָּה and וְ־). At the moment, these two

passages cannot be explained by the conclusion above.

In the second construction, attested 3 times, הִנֵּה נָא is followed by a nonvolitional

clause (and hence by a verb without נָא). In Gen 18:27 and 18:31, Abraham is haggling

with Yhwh to spare the city of Sodom. Patterns are evident in Abraham's use of נָא

following his initial "offer" of 50 righteous inhabitants:

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[1] Lambdin adduces Gen 19:19 as an example (*Introduction*, §136), but in fact the הִנֵּה־נָא clause there should be taken together with the הִנֵּה־נָא clause in v. 20a, both of which then form the grounds for the request (אִמָּלְטָה נָא) in v. 20b. (This is also observed in Timothy Wilt, "A Sociolinguistic Analysis of *Nāʾ*," *VT* 46 [1996]: 253.)

[2] One can rule out syntactical constraints, for נָא is attested with the plural cohortative elsewhere (e.g., 1 Kgs 20:31; 2 Kgs 4:10)

First renegotiation	הִנֵּה־נָא הוֹאַלְתִּי לְדַבֵּר אֶל־אֲדֹנָי וְאָנֹכִי עָפָר וָאֵפֶר אוּלַי יַחְסְרוּן חֲמִשִּׁים הַצַּדִּיקִם חֲמִשָּׁה הֲתַשְׁחִית בַּחֲמִשָּׁה אֶת־כָּל־הָעִיר [*sic*]
Second renegotiation	אוּלַי יִמָּצְאוּן שָׁם אַרְבָּעִים
Third renegotiation	אַל־נָא יִחַר לַאדֹנָי וַאֲדַבֵּרָה אוּלַי יִמָּצְאוּן שָׁם שְׁלֹשִׁים
Fourth renegotiation	הִנֵּה־נָא הוֹאַלְתִּי לְדַבֵּר אֶל־אֲדֹנָי אוּלַי יִמָּצְאוּן שָׁם עֶשְׂרִים
Fifth renegotiation	אַל־נָא יִחַר לַאדֹנָי וַאֲדַבְּרָה אַךְ־הַפַּעַם אוּלַי יִמָּצְאוּן שָׁם עֲשָׂרָה

The third and fifth renegotiations utilize a negated jussive with נָא. The first, second, and

fourth renegotiations incorporate an אוּלַי clause that contains a yiqtol with *nun*

paragogicum, but the first and fourth renegotiations preface the אוּלַי clause with הִנֵּה־נָא

and a declarative statement. הִנֵּה is readily used with such declarations. Might הִנֵּה־נָא be a

way to smuggle נָא into a clause that otherwise does not permit its use?[3] Yhwh's

responses to each of Abraham's statements confirm that Abraham's haggling is a request,

likely anticipated by הִנֵּה־נָא.

The third occurrence of this construction, 2 Kgs 2:19, is similarly explained. The

utterance, הִנֵּה־נָא מוֹשַׁב הָעִיר טוֹב כַּאֲשֶׁר אֲדֹנִי רֹאֶה וְהַמַּיִם רָעִים וְהָאָרֶץ מְשַׁכָּלֶת, is spoken to

Elisha by the men of Jericho. No context is given, but they obviously want Elisha to do

something, and he does purify the water. Perhaps, as Wilt suggests, this is still a request,

but an implicit one.[4]

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[3] Christiansen might be on to something with his suggestion that נָא can be a sentence-level modal particle after all (see earlier discussion).

[4] Wilt notes that English "It's cold in here," though not formally a request to turn up the heat, nevertheless can function so ("Sociolinguistic Analysis," 252).

The Expression אִם־נָא

Ten times, the expression אִם־נָא appears. Nine of those occurrences are in the phrase אִם־נָא מָצָ֫אתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶ֫יךָ. Eight of the nine times, the phrase is followed by a petitionary apodosis containing a volitional or a wəqataltí form.[5] In six of those instances, the volitional occurs with נָא, creating a pair, אִם־נָא ... יִקְטָל־נָא, so that, like הִנֵּה נָא, אִם־נָא may be a conditioned variant of אִם, anticipating the נָא in the apodosis. The exceptions are Judg 6:17 (וְעָשִׂ֫יתָ) and 1 Sam 27:5 (יִתְּנוּ־לִי), as one expects וַעֲשֵׂה־נָא (an imperative) in the former and יִתְּנוּ־נָא לִי in the latter instance. Perhaps, like הִנֵּה נָא, אִם־נָא marks an entire utterance with נָא and renders נָא with the verb optional.

Incidentally, it should be noted that the phrase אִם מָצָ֫אתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶ֫יךָ (without נָא) occurs only in Num 11:15 and 1 Sam 20:29. However, נָא occurs with an imperative earlier in the same utterances (in Num 11:15, the request of the apodosis precedes), and perhaps its force carries over to אִם. In all these instances, the מָצָא חֵן בְּעֵינַיִם phrase is paired with a request comprising a volitional with נָא. Indeed, in the corpus, any time a מָצָא חֵן בְּעֵינַיִם statement is paired with a request or petition expressed by a volitional, the volitional almost always takes נָא (Num 32:5; Judg 6:17;[6] and, as already mentioned, 1 Sam 27:5 are the only exceptions). Perhaps we are dealing here with a *forme fixée*.

Once (Gen 30:27) the phrase occurs but is left incomplete. Laban begins saying to

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[5] In Gen 33:10, the apodosis begins with וְלָקַחְתָּ, a wəqataltí that is not in series with a preceding volitional; a bit later in the same utterance, however, קַח־נָא appears (v. 11) and can reasonably be considered part of the apodosis. In Gen 40:14 the combination וְעָשִׂ֫יתָ־נָּא appears, but here the wəqataltí is in series with an preceding qatal that functions (anomalously) like a volitional; perhaps that is the deciding factor.

[6] In Judg 6:17, the apodosis begins with וְעָשִׂ֫יתָ, a wəqataltí form not in series with a preceding volitional and thus probably not expected to take נָא; see the earlier footnote regarding Gen 33:10.

נֶחְשַׁבְתִּי וַיְבָרֲכֵנִי יהוה בִּגְלָלֶךָ. After this, אִם־נָא מָצָאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ, but then drifts off to Jacob,
he gets to וַיֹּאמַר נָקְבָה שְׂכָרְךָ עָלַי וְאֶתֵּנָה, but the וַיֹּאמַר presents a major break (possibly due
to a false start), preventing אִם־נָא and the נָא-less נָקְבָה from creating a syntactical unit. Or
perhaps there is an ellipsis (*scil.* שֵׁב־נָא, so most English translations).[7] Another possibility
is that אִם־נָא has an asseverative sense: "Just do me the favor of hearing me out."

The tenth occurrence of אִם־נָא appears in Gen 24:42. In this verse, Abraham's
servant recounts to Rebecca's family his prayer at the well. It is a protasis without an
explicit apodosis. This can be contrasted with the record of the actual event:

Genesis 24:12–13a (event)	Genesis 24:42–43a (recollection)
יהוה אֱלֹהֵי אֲדֹנִי אַבְרָהָם	יהוה אֱלֹהֵי אֲדֹנִי אַבְרָהָם
הַקְרֵה־נָא לְפָנַי הַיּוֹם וַעֲשֵׂה־חֶסֶד עִם אֲדֹנִי אַבְרָהָם	אִם־יֶשְׁךָ־נָּא מַצְלִיחַ דַּרְכִּי אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי הֹלֵךְ עָלֶיהָ
הִנֵּה אָנֹכִי נִצָּב עַל־עֵין הַמָּיִם ...	הִנֵּה אָנֹכִי נִצָּב עַל־עֵין הַמָּיִם ...

In verse 42, אִם־יֶשְׁךָ־נָּא מַצְלִיחַ דַּרְכִּי is parallel to the request in verse 12, הַקְרֵה־נָא לְפָנַי
הַיּוֹם, and therefore likewise may indicate a request ("If you would cause my way to
prosper" = "Oh, cause my way to prosper")[8]—we will see that with the volitionals, נָא
marks an utterance as a request.[9]

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[7] So also Gesenius-Kautzsch, §159dd.

[8] Cf. JM §163c.

[9] Although the very same construction appears in Judg 6:36–37 (אִם יֶשְׁךָ מוֹשִׁיעַ בְּיָדִי אֶת־
יִשְׂרָאֵל ... הִנֵּה אָנֹכִי מַצִּיג ...), but אִם introduces a true protasis, not a request. Gideon essentially states,
"If you are planning to deliver Israel by my agency," followed by the evidence that Yhwh will have to
produce to convince him. Similarly, the identical constructions in Gen 24:49 and 43:4 are true protases,
complete with apodoses.

The Vocative Interjections נָא and אַל־נָא

Just once in the corpus (Num 12:13), נָא appears as an interjection with the vocative.

Since Miriam is Moses's sister and he is said to cry out (וַיִּצְעַק) to Yhwh to heal her (יְפָא
נָא לָהּ), perhaps נָא serves to intensify the request ("*O Dear* God"?). But strangely, it

appears in no other impassioned pleas (e.g., Judg 16:28, which likewise contains an

imperative with נָא as the request).

Little better attested is the negated interjection with the vocative אַל־נָא: it appears

just twice (Gen 19:18; 33:10). Its נָא-less counterpart occurs in Judg 19:23; 1 Sam 2:24;

2 Sam 13:12, 25; and 2 Kgs 4:16.[10] In the two Genesis passages, אַל־נָא anticipates a

request with נָא and thus either may be a conditioned variant of אַל or may further

emphasize that a request is being made. But a request with נָא follows in Judg 19:23 and

2 Sam 13:25 as well.[11] Why not use אַל־נָא in those two instances as well? Here we can

only speculate, and perhaps the speakers began with a forceful "No!" but then decided to

make a request, whereas in the Genesis passages the speakers envisioned a request all

along. Really, with so few occurrences, we are left guessing.

נָא with the Unnegated Third-Person Jussive

The unnegated (direct)[12] third-person jussive indicates the wish, hope, or desire of the

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[10] Although lacking in L, it occurs in 2 Sam 13:16 (cf. 2 Sam 13:12) in the LXX (Μή, ἄδελφε)
and in 4Q51Samᵃ: [אַל אֹ֯ת̇ה̇[י] (uncertain reading; DJD 17, p. 147).

[11] In 1 Sam 2:24 there is no request, either explicit or implicit: Eli simply scolds his sons; in
2 Sam 13:12 and 2 Kgs 4:16, נָא is not used with the negated jussives.

[12] Because the indirect jussive does not express a wish, it is not considered here. Jussives with a
purely conjunctive וְ, on the other hand, are included, as is the anomalous וִיהִי־נָא in 2 Kgs 2:9; 7:13. In
their respective sections, indirect cohortatives and indirect imperatives are not considered either, as they do
not function as volitionals.

speaker (cf. יָקֶם יְהוָה אֶת־דְּבָרוֹ, 1 Sam 1:23); it often functions as a command or directive

spoken to no one in particular or to a broad audience (cf. יְהִי אוֹר, Gen 1:3)—but not to the

addressee (this being reserved for the second-person imperative). When combined with

נָא, the unnegated third-person jussive indicates a request that the addressee act either to

do something or, more often, to grant permission to the speaker.[13] The use of a third-

person form (rather than addressing the hearer directly) provides redress for a threat to

the addressee's negative face.[14] There is no reason to think that נָא itself provides redress.

Genesis

The 6 times that נָא is used with the third-person jussive, a request is made to the

addressee for action/decision. In 18:4 Abraham asks the visitors to let him bring them

some water. Abimelech asks Isaac in 26:28 to participate in the creation of a pact.[15]

Similarly, Jacob's statement that Esau should go on ahead of him is a request (33:14), as

are Judah's requests of Joseph that he be allowed to speak (44:18) and to remain in place

of Benjamin (44:33),[16] and the brothers' request that Pharaoh allow them to settle in

Goshen (47:4).

Considering a potential counterexample, we note the jussive forms used by Joseph

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[13] Cf. Stephen A. Kaufman, "An Emphatic Plea for Please," *Maarav* 7 (1991), 196 ("One finds נָא only where the addressee . . . is the focus of the utterance"); and Ahouva Shulman, "The Particle נָא in Biblical Hebrew Prose," *HS* 40 (1999), 61 ("The function of נָא is to mark the utterance as a request of the addressee"). Both Kaufman and Shulman also believe נָא to be a politeness particle translatable as "please," a view not shared here.

[14] Cf. Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson, *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 203–6.

[15] Technically, the jussive in 26:28 is reported speech: Abimelech tells of a discussion he had with his men. But the use of the second person in בֵּינוֹתֵינוּ וּבֵינֶךָ indicates that utterance is intended for Isaac.

[16] The יַעַל that follows inherits the force of נָא from יֵשֶׁב־נָא: "Let me remain . . . and let me go up."

in addressing Pharaoh. After interpreting Pharaoh's dream (41:17–32), Joseph suggests

that Pharaoh find a discerning, wise man (וְעַתָּה יֵרֶא פַרְעֹה אִישׁ נָבוֹן וְחָכָם, 3ms juss., 41:33)

to set over Egypt, among other things. This is no general wish or desire; it is a specific

course of action suggested to Pharaoh, and yet נָא does not appear. But that is precisely

the point: it is only a suggestion and not an actual request that Pharaoh act.[17]

Exodus

The single use of נָא with the third-person jussive in 34:9 involves Moses addressing

Yhwh, asking that he accompany the people. This is not a mere wish or desire; it is a

request that Yhwh act.

Numbers

The single use of נָא with the third-person jussive (14:17) occurs on the lips of Moses

entreating Yhwh—since Yhwh's very honor and reputation among the nations is at

stake—to kick it into high gear and use his might to bring his (rebellious and wicked)

people to the promised land.

Judges

In the first occurrence, Gideon asks Yhwh to make a fleece dry while the ground is wet

(6:39); in the second, Manoah asks Yhwh to bring back a messenger (13:8). The נָא-less

waw-jussive in 19:6 appears to inherit the force of the נָא from הוֹאֶל־נָא, such that וְיִטַב לִבֶּךָ

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[17] These verses further show that נָא need not be seen as a politeness particle; Joseph addresses
Pharaoh with the deferential פַּרְעֹה and uses third-person verb forms. His speech already reveals politeness
strategies.

is a request to act ("Enjoy yourself"). The same is true in 19:9.

1 Samuel

In 16:16 Saul's servants ask that he send them out to fetch an assistant; in 16:22 Saul asks

Jesse to let David stay in Saul's service (so also 22:3); in 26:19, David asks Saul to listen

to him. Once, נָא is used with a third-person *waw*-jussive form (the *waw* appears to

function like וְעַתָּה): in 25:24 Abigail asks David to let her speak. And in 27:5 the נָא-less

jussive יִתְּנוּ־לִי inherits the force of נָא from the preceding אִם־נָא (hence understood as ־אִם

נָא ... יִתְּנוּ־נָא־לִי), so that David asks Achish to give (the passive is a politeness strategy)[18]

him a settlement.[19]

2 Samuel

The unnegated third-person jussive appears with נָא 11 times. The first instance, 2:14, is

unlike others encountered so far. Joab says to Abner, יָק֤וּמוּ נָא֙ הַנְּעָרִים ("Have the men get

up"). Given that the two are military leaders and peers, Joab is not asking Abner to act

alone. More likely, he is proposing they act together to effect this tournament. Abner's

reply, יָקֻֽמוּ (instead of יָקוּמוּ־נָא) is less an actual volitional form than a repetition of the

verb to express the affirmative (i.e., "Okay," "Sure"). In the other instances, Amnon's

friend tells Amnon to ask David to send Tamar to him (13:5), and Amnon does so (13:6);

Absalom asks David to send over first the entire family (13:24) and then just Amnon

(13:26). Joab's hired woman asks David to mention a matter to Yhwh (14:11), asks for

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[18] Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 194–97.

[19] Note too David's self-abasing עַבְדְּךָ later in the utterance, providing redress.

permission to speak herself (14:12), and asks him utter the question he has in mind

(14:18); Barzillai asks David to allow him stay in his town (19:38);[20] and David asks that

Yhwh punish him and his family (24:17).

One instance is less straightforward: 14:17. When the woman Joab hires says to

David, יְהְיֶה־נָּא דְּבַר־אֲדֹנִי הַמֶּלֶךְ לִמְנוּחָה, she is repeating something that she allegedly

thought to herself (וַתֹּאמֶר שִׁפְחָתְךָ) before coming to him. Assuming that יְהְיֶה is a long-

form jussive (see discussion above, ad loc.), this seems like a general desire rather than a

request that David act. However, the woman is wise (חֲכָמָה, v. 2) and has devised an

elaborate story to convince the king to change his mind regarding Absalom. She may be

dropping a hint that David in fact *should* say something reassuring (and thereby spring

the trap). The rhetorical force might be something like "I told myself, Oh, may my lord

the king's word put me at ease (wink, wink, hint, hint, O King)."

1 Kings

Solomon asks that Yhwh fulfill his promise to David (8:26);[21] Elijah asks Yhwh to

restore the life of widow's son (17:21); Ben-hadad's men bring a message asking that his

life be spared (20:31); and Ahab's servant asks Micaiah to join the other prophets in his

prophecy (22:13).

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[20] The jussive יַעֲבֹר, which appears later in the verse, inherits the force from נָא and also is a request for permission.

[21] That this interpretation of the jussive with נָא is correct is suggested by the fact that Solomon in fact uses an imperative earlier in this utterance: וְעַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁמֹר ... וְעַתָּה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יֵאָמֶן נָא.

A military commander asks Elijah to consider his life and the lives of his men as precious (1:13; the commander refers self-abasingly to נַפְשִׁי וְנֶפֶשׁ עֲבָדֶיךָ);[22] Elisha requests Elijah's spirit twice over (2:9); the sons of the prophets ask permission to look for Elijah (2:16); Elisha tells the king to send Naaman to him (5:8); Naaman asks that soil be given to him (5:17); a servant asks that the king allow investigators to take horses (7:13).[23]

נָא with the Negated Third-Person Jussive

The third-person jussive negated by אַל presents a command or wish that an addressee refrain from acting or that a state of affairs not transpire.[24] If נָא with the third-person jussive indicates a request that an addressee act to effect or permit an action, it follows that אַל־נָא with the third-person jussive likely presents a command or wish that the addressee act to prevent an event from taking place or to put an end to an event, perhaps (though not necessarily) in contexts that involve urgency to action. Thus, when God says to Abraham, אַל־יֵרַע בְּעֵינֶיךָ (Gen 21:12), he is telling (or advising?) Abraham merely to refrain from viewing a situation in a certain way. And when Abigail tells David, אַל־נָא יָשִׂים אֲדֹנִי אֶת־לִבּוֹ אֶל־אִישׁ הַבְּלִיַּעַל (1 Sam 25:25aα), she is telling him to put Nabal out of

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[22] It should be noted that although he says תִּיקַר־נָא נַפְשִׁי in 1:13, he says only תִּיקַר נַפְשִׁי in the following verse; given that נָא is so rarely repeated within the same utterance, it likely is inherited here, so that תִּיקַר נַפְשִׁי is also a request.

[23] It is not clear whether the forms in 2:16 and 7:13 are conjunctive *waw*-jussives or indirect jussives.

[24] An analysis of the difference between the third-person jussive negated with אַל and negated with לֹא is beyond the scope of this paper. *IBHS* §34.2.1b notes simply that אַל predominates, but it does not indicate a difference in meaning between the two, nor do Arnold and Choi see any obvious distinction (Bill T. Arnold and John H. Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003], 63 n. 60).

mind and cool down, for he is a worthless fool and not worthy of David's current anger (25:25aβ)—lest she and her household be destroyed (25:17).

The construction occurs only a handful of times in the corpus—five or six times—and the interpretation therefore can only be tentative.

Genesis

Depending on how one counts, the construction appears four times in Genesis. In 13:8, Abram asks Lot to put an end to the strife between his shepherds and Abram's, and toward this end Abram suggests a course of action that he and Lot can take. In 18:30 and 18:32, Abraham twice asks Yhwh not to become angry (אַל־נָא יִחַר לַאדֹנָי). What is the difference between Abraham's request of God and, say, Rachel's of her father (אַל־יִחַר בְּעֵינֵי אֲדֹנִי, 31:35), Judah's of Joseph (אַל־יִחַר אַפְּךָ, 44:18), Joseph's of his brothers (וְאַל־יִחַר בְּעֵינֵיכֶם, 45:5), Aaron's of Moses (אַל־יִחַר אַף אֲדֹנִי, Exod 32:22)—or, parallel to this, Gideon's of God (אַל־יִחַר אַפְּךָ בִּי, Judg 6:39)? Note that in Gen 18:30, 32, Abraham is bargaining for the lives of human beings: the stakes are enormous, and he is involving Yhwh in an extended process of argumentation that requires not just refraining from anger but perhaps even active self-pacification and restraint, lest Yhwh lose his patience and not hear Abraham out to the end.

Contrast this with אַל־יִחַר. In Gen 31:35, Rachel asks her father to forgive her refusal to rise in his presence due to menstruation; in 45:5, Joseph essentially tells his brothers to overlook their treatment of him; in Exod 32:22, Aaron deflects Moses's anger against him by very diplomatic "You yourself know how these people are bent on doing evil"; and even though in Judg 6:39 Gideon is bargaining with Yhwh (as does Abraham

in Genesis 18), he is merely asking for proof that Yhwh has chosen him to deliver Israel. In these instances, the stakes simply are very high, and אַל־יִחַר appears to be a milder request that the addressee simply not get angry.

But this interpretation will not work in Genesis 44:18: the stakes truly are high. Benjamin could be thrown into an Egyptian jail, and Jacob could fall into such deep sorrow that he dies. But this is one of the "depending on how one counts" passages. Judah does not merely ask, אַל־יִחַר. Rather, this is part of a larger request: בִּי אֲדֹנִי יְדַבֶּר־נָא עַבְדְּךָ דָבָר בְּאָזְנֵי אֲדֹנִי וְאַל־יִחַר אַפְּךָ בְּעַבְדֶּךָ, and וְאַל־יִחַר inherits the נָא from the preceding יְדַבֶּר־נָא. Thus, the sense is "Permit me to speak, and restrain any anger that my words might arouse in you." This is more evidence that the force of נָא is inherited by other verbs within an utterance.

Numbers

In 12:12 the stakes are high again. Yhwh has struck Miriam with a devastating skin disease, and Aaron pleads with Moses (addressing him in 12:11 with a deferential בִּי אֲדֹנִי) not to let her be like a stillborn baby. Given Miriam's condition, אַל־נָא תְהִי must mean more than just "prevent her from be[com]ing," and more likely it is a plea for Moses to actively intervene to arrest the process that Yhwh has begun (which he does in v. 13).

A weakness in Shulman's otherwise perceptive study becomes evident here. Shulman states that the third-person jussive negated by אַל־נָא "is used when the speaker requests the addressee not to act against him" and comments that Aaron's request "is directed to Moses and presented as an emotional request for help."[25] Yes, this is an

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[25] Ahouva Shulman, "The Particle נָא in Biblical Hebrew Prose," *HS* 40 (1999): 64.

emotional request, but as noted earlier, Shulman regularly attributes "emotional,"
"humbl[e]," and "polite" nuances to נָא without considering that these nuances may come
from the context instead (to judge from the preceding chapter, נָא appears in plenty of
utterances that are not particularly emotional or expressive of humility). Further, Aaron is
not pleading with Moses not to act against him; he is pleading with Moses to take action
to stop what Yhwh is doing to Miriam.

1 Samuel

Abigail's use of אַל־נָא with the third-person jussive in 25:25 has already been discussed.

נָא with the Cohortative

In prose, the direct cohortative indicates the volition of the speaker, be it intent, resolve,
or desire. Examples abound in the singular: Hagar declares to herself that she does not
want to look on (אַל־אֶרְאֶה, Gen 21:16) as Ishmael dies; Moses declares that he would like
to pass through (אֶעְבְּרָה, Num 21:22) Sihon's land; and a frustrated Absalom makes it
clear to Joab that he has had enough of waiting and is determined to have an audience
(אֶרְאֶה פְּנֵי, 2 Sam 14:32) with the king. In Exodus 32:30 Moses uses a cohortative with an
optative sense: אוּלַי אֲכַפְּרָה.

In the plural, the direct cohortative conveys a summons to action, essentially
projecting the speaker's volition onto a group ("Let's" in the sense of "I want / would like
us to"). While planning his strategy, for example, Saul calls on his men to go down with
him (נֵרְדָה, 1 Sam 14:36) with him to attack the Philistines' camp. In other instances, the
cohortative reflects the emerging or general consensus of a group: the people at Shinar

agree among themselves to build a city and to make a name for themselves (... נִבְנֶה

וְנַעֲשֶׂה, Gen 11:4).

According to many grammars, the cohortative also expresses a request. This poses

a difficulty that is especially evident in Joüon-Muraoka: how can the same form express

both "a manifestation of the speaker's will" and "an appeal to someone else's will"?[26] Or

in Waltke-O'Connor: how can the same form express both "resolve" and "request"?[27] Or

both "intention or resolve" and "a wish or entreaty"?[28] In fact, it does not, at least not by

itself. The cohortative expresses the speaker's will, and it is by adding נָא that the speaker

invites a response from the addressee to a proposed action,[29] be it a request for

permission,[30] or be it simply an opportunity for input.[31] In no instance in our corpus is the

cohortative by itself ever used to request either permission or interaction from the

addressee, yet in every instance the cohortative with נָא (actually, always נָּא) does

precisely this. Its translation value therefore is "I intend to . . .; what do you think?,"

"How about I . . .?," or "May I . . .?" in the singular and "What do you say we . . .?" or

"How about we . . .?" in the plural.

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[26] JM §114b.

[27] *IBHS* §34.5.1a.

[28] J. C. L. Gibson, ed., *Davidson's Introductory Hebrew Grammar: Syntax* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), §68.

[29] This is in essential agreement with Bent Christiansen, "A Linguistic Analysis of the Biblical Hebrew Particle *nāʾ*: A Test Case," *VT* 59 (2009): 385–86.

[30] Cf. Robert David, "L'analyse syntaxique, outil pour la traduction biblique: le cas des cohortatifs," in *Traduire la Bible Hébraïque* (ed. Robert David and Manuel Jinbachian; Montreal: Médiaspaul, 2005), 282–83.

[31] Contrary to the assertion of Ahouva Shulman ("Particle נָא," 74), requests—not merely polite ones—are only a subset of the function of the cohortative with נָא.

Genesis

Genesis 18:21 sometimes is presented as a soliloquy of Yhwh,[32] but in verse 23 Abraham asks whether Yhwh will really sweep away the righteous along with the wicked. This makes sense only if Abraham has overheard Yhwh and thinks Yhwh will heed his concern. If Yhwh's אֵרֲדָה־נָּא is in fact an invitation for Abraham to comment, then the entire passage makes sense.[33] Lot's offer in Genesis 19:8 to bring out (אוֹצִיאָה־נָּא, "What if I?") his two daughters is offered for the citizens' consideration, and in 19:20 he suggests to the messengers—subject to their approval—an escape (אִמָּלְטָה נָּא, "How about I?") to a nearby town. In 33:15 Esau offers to leave (אַצִּיגָה־נָּא, "What do you say I?") some of his entourage with Jacob. In 38:16 Judah propositions Tamar to let him "enter" (הָבָה־נָּא אָבוֹא, "Hey, baby, mind if I?") Tamar, and in 50:5 Joseph asks Pharaoh for permission to attend to (אֶעֱלֶה־נָּא, "May I?") his father's final remains.

One might object that Abraham asks permission to speak in 18:30, 32, using וַאֲדַבְּרָה without נָּא. To be sure, the וְ here functions as a pure conjunction, so that the cohortative is not indirect, but in each case it seems more likely that Abraham is saying, "Let not the Lord be angry; I am going to speak": he is not requesting permission to speak or waiting for some other response from Yhwh before proceeding.

Exodus

In 3:18 Yhwh tells Moses to go to Pharaoh and ask permission to take the Hebrews (cf. 5:3) on a pilgrimage into the desert, and in 4:18 Moses asks Jethro to let him return to his

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[32] E.g., David, "L'analyse syntaxique," 282 n. 25; Shulman, "Particle נָּא," 78.

[33] Gordon Wenham (*Genesis 16–50* [Waco, Tex.: Word, 1994], 50) attributes this invitation to Yhwh's וְאִם־לֹא; I suspect Abraham's license to speak comes instead from Yhwh's use of נָּא.

people in Egypt.[34]

Exodus 3:3 presents a difficulty for the view presented here. While keeping Jethro's flock, Moses sees a bush that is on fire but not consumed, so he says he will turn aside (אָסֻרָה־נָּא) in order to look at (וְאֶרְאֶה, an indirect cohortative) it. If a cohortative with נָא invites feedback from the hearer, it is strange that the narrative presents Moses as alone. This passage presents a difficulty for other views: there is no apparent reason Moses should be expressing a polite or softened request, acknowledging his dependence on another's resources, or portraying his intent to be the logical consequence of a state of affairs. Wilt speculates that נָא "suggests that one of the traditions behind this account may have had him asking 'the angel of YHWH,' mentioned in the immediately preceding verse, permission to advance to look at the bush.[35] More likely is Michael Williams's suggestion that Moses is announcing his intent to investigate and asking for a warning if this not acceptable (presumably, Moses believes an intelligent being is causing this spectacle).[36]

Potential difficulties are also posed by 5:8 and 5:17. In 5:8 Pharaoh tells his taskmasters not to provide the Israelites with straw for their bricks and not to reduce their quota: they are lazy, and that is why they cry, נֵלְכָה נִזְבְּחָה לֵאלֹהֵינוּ. In 5:17 Pharaoh confronts the Israelites' overseers with the same message and scolds them for being lazy: that is why they say, נֵלְכָה נִזְבְּחָה לַיהוָה. These are requests, and yet they are stated without נָא; Pharaoh may have rhetorical purposes for not presenting the requests as such. Perhaps

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[34] In 4:18 the וְ may be conjunctive, in which case the force of נָא carries through, or perhaps וְאָשׁוּבָה is a telic indirect cohortative, in which case נָא does not apply to it.

[35] Wilt, "Analysis of *NĀʾ*," 245 n. 20.

[36] Personal correspondence, April 2013.

he wishes to focus on his accusation of sloth, or perhaps he wants to portray the requests as whining.

<div align="center">Numbers</div>

In Num 20:17 Moses asks permission of the king of Edom to pass through the land on their way to Canaan. It is noteworthy that after Edom refuses, Moses uses a cohortative without נָא (נַעֲלֶה, v. 19); however, if Moses here is not making a request ("May we go up?") but rather stating an intent ("We plan to go up"; cf. the EVV) in order to clarify Israel's innocent motives, no difficulty is posed to the view being defended here—in fact, if נָא were a politeness particle, one probably would expect it in the repeated request.

Numbers 21:22 similarly poses a difficulty, for the context suggests that the נָא-less אֶעְבְּרָה is indeed a request ("Let me pass"). But Moses here is retelling his past conversation with Sihon, and it is possible that his intent is to focus on Sihon's refusal to let Israel pass rather than on the request as a request.

<div align="center">Deuteronomy</div>

In Deut 3:25 Moses tells of how he pleaded (cf. וָאֶתְחַנַּן, v. 23) with Yhwh regarding Cisjordan, and Moses's use of אֶעְבְּרָה־נָּא presents his desire to cross and invites interaction (in this case, permission) from Yhwh. Must one render נָא here as "please"? Not necessarily, for immediately preceding the request, Moses speaks of Yhwh's greatness and strong hand and of Yhwh's uniqueness when it comes to marvelous and powerful deeds. These already provide politeness for the request, and "May I cross over?" is an acceptable translation.

One might object that the cohortative without נָא expresses a request in 1:22; 2:27, 28; and 13:3, 7, 14. Working backward, we note that the three instances in chapter 13 involve calls to idolatry that Israel might face and repulse. If (אִם, v. 2) a prophet or dreamer shows signs but then summons, נֵלְכָה אַחֲרֵי אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים (v. 3), and if (אִם, vv. 6, 12) a member of one's own family or rabble-rousers say, נֵלְכָה וְנַעַבְדָה אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים (vv. 7, 14), then Israel must deal decisively with this threat. Rhetorically, it is more effective to portray a threat as a conviction than as a mere request that invites the input of others ("I'm in the mind that we should go after other gods; what do you all think about something like that?" lacks gravitas); by forgoing the נָא, Moses portrays an intent that may find consensus and spread quickly, with disastrous results.

The cohortatives in 2:27, 28 resemble what was discussed in Num 21:22. Here, as there, Moses's focus may be on the refusal of Sihon to let him pass. The claim made is this paper is that נָא is added to a cohortative when the speaker invites interaction from the addressee. This is necessarily a subjective choice, and a speaker who does not wish to *portray* a request as a request may have rhetorical reasons for not using נָא.

Finally, 1:22 is a thorny case. That the Israelites' cohortative (נִשְׁלְחָה אֲנָשִׁים לְפָנֵינוּ) is a request is demonstrated by Moses's statement in the next verse that he gave his consent (וַיִּיטַב בְּעֵינַי הַדָּבָר). However, there are not-so-subtle hints in the text that Moses is bitter and thinks he has been treated unjustly. First, he has told the people that God has given them the land and that they should not fear or feel overwhelmed (vv. 20–21). However, "you all [כֻּלְּכֶם, v. 22]" came to him with a proposal that would lead to disaster—and to Moses's being banned from entering the land. Yes, Moses consented to their "request," and yet in spite of the spies' glowing reports of how good the land was,

the ungrateful, unbelieving people did not enter and instead rebelled. Was the people's

actual request נִשְׁלְחָה־נָּא אֲנָשִׁים לְפָנֵינוּ? Perhaps, but this is all their fault. Consenting to

נִשְׁלְחָה־נָּא ("May we?") would mean he granted permission; consenting to נִשְׁלְחָה ("We

want to") suggests he simply gave them what they wanted and that he is their victim.

Joshua

In 22:26 the Transjordan tribes explain that they feared being excluded by the tribes west

of the Jordan and therefore decided to build a memorial altar. the use of נָא here suggests a

proposal subjected to interaction—perhaps discussion and debate—before a group

consensus emerged.

Judges

In 6:39 Gideon expresses the hope that Yhwh will not get mad (אַל יִחַר אַפְּךָ, the absence

of נָא suggests this is a desire), but he is going to speak (וַאֲדַבְּרָה, without נָא)[37] just once

more. If it's all right with Yhwh, he would like to try just one more test (אֲנַסֶּה נָּא־רַק

הַפַּעַם). In 11:17 Jephthah tells of how Israel's messengers ask the king of Edom for

permission to pass through his land; then they asked Sihon (נַעְבְּרָה־נָּא, v. 19; but cf.

discussion of Num 21:22 and Deut 2:27, 28). In 13:15 Manoah asks to detain the angel of

Yhwh for a meal.[38] In 14:12 Samson asks his guests whether they would like to hear a

riddle (אָחוּדָה־נָּא לָכֶם חִידָה; note their consent, חוּדָה חִידָתְךָ, in v. 13). In 19:24 the man of

Gibeah offers to bring out his daughter and the Levite's concubine to the townsmen, who

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[37] If the וְ is not conjunctive, then this is an indirect cohortative: "so that I might speak."

[38] If the following וְנַעֲשֶׂה is coordinate (i.e., "May we detain you and prepare?"), then the force of נָא carries through.

refuse. In all of these passages, נָא occurs with a cohortative to indicate that an offer,

suggestion, or request is being made that the addressee respond.

Three passages require explanation. In 8:24 Gideon makes a request of the

Ishmaelites with a נָא-less cohortative, אֶשְׁאֲלָה מִכֶּם שְׁאֵלָה. But the cohortative itself is not

the request; rather, it is a declaration of a request: "I have a request of you" (cf. the new

NIV; the Einheitsübersetzung's "Ich möchte euch um etwas bitten" is too weak, as are the

renderings of the ESV, NET, and NRSV). In 19:11 the Levite's servant suggests they pull

in (וְנָסוּרָה) to Jebus for the night (the immediately preceding לְכָה־נָּא makes it unnecessary

to repeat the נָא).[39] And the Ephraimites' נָא-less אֶעֱבֹרָה in 12:5 is portrayed as a statement

of intent and not as a request open to discussion: "I want to cross" or perhaps even a

strong "Let me cross!" (the Ephraimites are the bad guys, after all).

1 Samuel

In 20:29 Jonathan reports to Saul that David has asked permission to take his leave and

visit his family. In 26:8 Abishai asks David to let him kill Saul with a spear.[40]

2 Samuel

David uses a rare, negated cohortative with נָא in 13:25 in response to Absalom's

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[39] Note, in contrast, the Levite's response in verse 13: לְךָ וְנִקְרְבָה (without נָא, as the expression
is not a suggestion or request). Genesis 38:16 is the only other instance of this construction: out of 21
instances of a hortatory imperative with the cohortative, נָא appears twice on the imperative and once on a
cohortative (1 Kgs 1:12), but never on both.

[40] Then, in verse 11, David denies the request, telling Abishai to take (קַח־נָא) Saul's spear and
water jug instead, and tells them to go (וְנֵלְכָה לָּנוּ). If the וְ is conjunctive here, context suggests that the
force of the נָא does not carry through to the cohortative: David is saying, "Grab the spear and jug, and then
let's [i.e., I *want* us to, and therefore we *will*] go," not "Grab the spear and jug, and then we should get out
of here, don't you think?" Even less is he saying, "Grab the spear and jug, if you don't mind, and then
please let's go."

invitation: "If you don't mind, I don't think we all need to go." In 15:7 Absalom asks

David's permission to go to Hebron to fulfill a vow, and similar requests for permission

occur in 16:9 and 17:1. Ahimaaz twice asks Joab to let him run off (אָרֽוּצָה נָּא, 18:19, 22)

to bring news of Absalom's death to David, and then, his request twice turned down,

Ahimaaz finally informs Joab that he is going to run, end of discussion (אָרֻוץ, v. 23), and

Joab's reply, רוּץ, is a formality: there is no point in trying to restrain this ambitious man

any longer.[41]

Two passages involving the cohortative with נָא are difficult. In the first, 14:15, the

wise woman from Tekoa, whom Nathan sends to David to change his mind regarding

Absalom, explains to the king that in her distress she thought to herself, אֲדַבְּרָה־נָּא אֶל־

הַמֶּ֫לֶךְ. Note the similarity to her statement in verse 17:

14:15	וַתֹּ֫אמֶר שִׁפְחָתְךָ אֲדַבְּרָה־נָא אֶל־הַמֶּ֫לֶךְ
14:17	וַתֹּ֫אמֶר שִׁפְחָתְךָ יִהְיֶת־נָא דְבַר־אֲדֹנִי הַמֶּ֫לֶךְ לִמְנוּחָה

Recall the proposal above that the use of the third-person jussive with נָא in verse 17 is a

subtle hint that she expects the king to act in such a way as to provide comfort. Perhaps

the cohortative with נָא hints that she would like to say something (more) to the king. In

light of the flattery in verse 16 on top of this, David should—and does—think that

something is coming. The widow's use of נָא in verses 15 and 17 are thus part of her

strategy to get the king to reconcile with Absalom.

In the second passage, 24:14, David says, נִפְּלָה־נָּא בְיַד־יְהוָה. The נָא indicates that

David is involving the addressee in his proposal, but the narrative does not record any

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[41] Contrary to JM §114n, the נָא-less cohortative אָרֻוץ is not a request (JM translates "Shall I run?") but a declaration of Ahimaaz's intent after he finally has had enough: "I'm going to run!"

such subsequent interaction. He may be speaking to Gad, due to his switch from the plural to the singular: "I'm in a bad situation. We should succumb [נִפְּלָה־נָּא] to Yhwh's dealing, because he is very merciful—don't you think? But I don't want to succumb [אַל־אֶפֹּלָה] to man's dealing." The switch might suggest David is thinking out loud, and he may have drawn Gad into his line of reasoning.

1 Kings

In 1:12 Nathan asks Bathsheba to let him to give her some advice. In 19:20, after Elijah calls Elisha, the latter asks whether he may first take leave of his father and mother; and in 20:31 Ben-hadad's servants ask him to let them dress in ropes and sackcloth and go out (נָשִׂימָה נָּא ... וְנֵצֵא; the force of נָא carries through) to the king of Israel to bargain for Ben-hadad's life.

2 Kings

In 4:10 the Shunamite woman suggests to her husband that they build living quarters for Elisha; in 6:2 Elisha's followers come to him and complain that their living quarters are too cramped and ask him to let them go to the Jordan to fetch building materials. Finally, in 7:12 Jehoram, suspecting a trap set by the Arameans, says to his servants, אַגִּידָה־נָּא לָכֶם אֵת אֲשֶׁר־עָשׂוּ לָנוּ אֲרָם. This probably is a rhetorical use of נָא: just as in English ("Let me tell you what the Arameans have done to us"), it is a statement worded as a request.

נָא with the Imperative

So far, the rabbinic dictum cited by Kaufman has proved correct: נָא is a term of

petition.[42] Used with the direct third-person jussive, it makes a wish into a request that the addressee act, and used with the direct cohortative, it invites a response from the addressee. Using the third person in a request of the addressee provides redress, as does an invitation for the addressee to express an opinion, give feedback, or grant permission. Might נָא with the imperative function similarly?

The imperative already impresses the speaker's will onto the addressee, be it to make commands, to give directions, to suggest action, or to grant consent or agreement (e.g., "You may do *x*" or "Go ahead, do *x*").[43] Combined with the imperative, נָא has a "softening" effect, with the result that "Do *x*," a bald, on-record face-threatening act without redress,[44] becomes more of a request or even a strong suggestion: "I would like you to do *x*," "You should do *x*," "How about you do *x*?," "You can go ahead and do *x*," or even "Please do *x*." Further, נָא itself provides redress in this way, though the amount and nuance varies according to the context and to the use of additional politeness strategies, and therefore no one translation value is possible.

The construction occurs too many times to allow discussion of every instance. Therefore, only a representative selection of the easy passages and more difficult passages is discussed.

The Easy Passages

The imperative with נָא appears often in prayers to Yhwh (e.g., Gen 24:12; Exod 33:13;

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[42] Kaufman, "Emphatic Plea," 195 n. 1.

[43] Ernst Jenni, "Höfliche Bitte im Alten Testament," Congress Volume: Basel, 2001 (SupVTS 92; ed. A. Lemaire; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 3.

[44] Cf. 2 Kgs 4:29, for example, in which Elisha forgoes all redressive strategies and issues a string of bald, on-record imperatival and modal-yiqtol FTAs in light of the urgency of the situation.

Judg 13:8; 1 Sam 23:11; 2 Kgs 6:17, 18). In prayer to the Deity, the bare imperative already functions as a request rather than as a command: "I ask that you do *x*." This likely is due to redress from the petitioner's physical posture or intonation (neither of which is represented orthographically), the nature of the ceremony (esp. in a public prayer; cf. 1 Kgs 8:26), or formal vocatives such as אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה (Deut 9:26) and יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל (2 Kgs 19:15). If the addition of נָא further softens these requests—that is, adds redress—then a likely English translation is "Please do *x*."

A similar situation is that of people addressing guests. In Gen 19:2 Lot addresses the two men formally, as אֲדֹנַי, and his imperative סוּרוּ נָא is a request that could translate to "Won't you turn aside?" or even "Please turn aside." In Judg 19:6, 8, 9 the father-in-law uses נָא in each of his statements. Do fathers-in-law address sons-in-law with "please" in English? If not, "Why don't you spend the night?" is a suitable rendering—the speaker places a desire upon the hearer but phrases it as a question to give redress.

The encounter between Jacob and Esau in Genesis 33 is an extended example. Jacob uses numerous redress strategies, such as referring to himself as עַבְדְּךָ, calling Esau אֲדֹנִי, using third-person forms in reference to Esau, using אִם־נָא מָצָאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ, and offering a large gift to his brother. In addition he uses the imperative קַח־נָא; if it is politeness overload to render "Please take," then phrasing it as a question, "Won't you take?," is suitable.

In short, the easy passages are those with plenty of redress strategies and those in which a social inferior addresses a social superior (whether or not objectively superior—

sometimes the art of persuasion requires flattery).[45] In such instances, English

translations such as "Please do *x*" and "Won't you do *x*?" provide polite redress.[46] The

difficult passages are those in which a social superior addresses a (rhetorically or

objectively) social inferior.

The Difficult Passages

Would an English-speaking king ask of a soldier, "Would you do *x*?" or "Please do *x*"?

Perhaps in a situation of helplessness (cf. Saul's alleged request of the Amalekite in 2

Sam 1:9), but this seems less likely in normal situations. In 1 Sam 22:7 a paranoid Saul

(cf. v. 8a) asks his men whether David has bought them off. His introductory שִׁמְעוּ־נָא בְּנֵי

יְמִינִי cannot mean "Please listen, you Benjaminites": it is a summons to listen.[47] But a

summons can be presented in softened form, as in English "Listen up!," which provides

more redress than a curt "Listen!" but has the same illocutionary force.

Another example is 1 Sam 14:17. Saul's men see mayhem in the Philistine camp,

and Saul instructs them to call the roll in order to find out (פִּקְדוּ־נָא וּרְאוּ) who it is. Is he

afraid that someone else will receive the glory for winning a victory against the

Philistines? Hard to tell, but it is difficult to imagine Saul saying "please" in this context,

and Shulman admits the function of נָא is "difficult to determine" here.[48] But נָא need not

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[45] Cf. for example, Balak's regular use of נָא when addressing Balaam in Numbers 22–23. Is Balaam socially superior to a king? In a sense it doesn't matter: Balak knows Balaam can provide something he needs, so he lets the politeness flow. The same goes for the agents of the mighty Sennacherib, who use נָא when negotiating with Hezekiah's men in 2 Kings 18.

[46] Gen 40:14, with the wǝqataltí וְעָשִׂיתָ־נָא, conveys a request as well.

[47] Shulman, however, does not see this as a command ("Particle נָא," 69 n. 37).

[48] Shulman, "Particle נָא," 70 n. 41.

provide *much* redress: "I need you to call the roll and see" is no pretty-please, but neither

is it as strong a face-threatening act as "Call the roll and see!" And certainly it is

something one might hear from a commander.

Gesenius-Kautzsch suggests that נָא can indicate scoffing,[49] which is to say ironic

politeness, and this appears to be the case in Judg 9:38. The leader of Shechem chides

Gaal, noting that Abimelech's men, whom he so despised, are now coming to get him.

His taunting imperative, צֵא־נָא עַתָּה וְהִלָּחֶם בּוֹ, is anything but polite. Although too

colloquial (or is it?), the rendering "Um, here's an idea: how about you go out and do

battle with them?" is probably not too far off the mark. Better, perhaps, is "Why don't

you go out and do battle with them?"—a question (formally giving Gaal a chance to say

no) with the illocutionary force of a command. There is formal redress, but all in

mockery.

The scene with Amnon and Tamar in 2 Samuel 13 begins as expected. Tamar

pleads with Amnon to ask the king for her hand: דַּבֶּר־נָא אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ ("Please ask the king"

or "Why don't you ask the king?"). He rapes her and is then filled with deep seething,

telling her, קוּמִי לֵכִי ("Get out!"). She pleads with him, and he summons a servant. Oddly,

he uses נָא when addressing the servant: first, the servant is his inferior, and second, he is

in a rage (in which case one might be expected to forgo redress). He orders the servant,

שִׁלְחוּ־נָא אֶת־זֹאת מֵעָלַי הַחוּצָה וּנְעֹל הַדֶּלֶת אַחֲרֶיהָ (the force of נָא carries over to וּנְעֹל). If נָא

does provide redress, it does so minimally, and perhaps a translation like "Would you

send this creature outside, away from my sight, and lock the door behind her?" (or "Send

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[49] E. Kautzsch, ed., *Wilhelm Gesenius' Hebräische Grammatik* (28th rev. ed.; Leipzig: Vogel, 1909), §110d.

this . . ., would you?") captures the small amount of formal redress.

What about God? Does the transcendent, omnipotent, sovereign Creator say "please" when telling a creature to do something? As noted in the opening, Van der Merwe et al. do not think so, and although one cannot be dogmatic, it does seem unlikely. So, what of the instances when God uses נָא? It is one thing to doubt that God uses "please" and another to claim that he never offers redress. Thus, in Gen 13:14 God repeats his promise to Abram of land and seed, telling him, with נָא, to look at the vastness of the land. "Please lift your eyes and look" is not right, as though God were a flight attendant pointing out the emergency exits; however, "Go ahead, lift your eyes and look" or "I would like you to lift your eyes and look" seems fitting. It is in Abram's best interests to look, after all, for in this way he will begin to understand the graciousness and vastness of the promise, and redress is appropriate.[50] Again, in 15:5, Yhwh invites Abram (with נָא) to look up and count the stars, prompting him to do what is in his own best interests. Finally, in 22:2 Yhwh tests Abraham: קַח־נָא ... וְלֶךְ־לְךָ ... וְהַעֲלֵהוּ. "Please" cannot be right here: a deity surely does not call for human sacrifice with "please." But we are told in verse 1 that this is a test, and as such, Yhwh is leaving available the option for Abraham to fail the test by refusing. Consequently, "I would like you to" seems a suitable translation.

Finally, in Judg 13:3–4 the angel of Yhwh appears to Manoah's wife, calls attention to the fact that she is barren, and yet promises her a child, though she is to avoid (הִשָּׁמְרִי נָא) alcohol and unclean foods. Is the angel/Yhwh asking "please" here? Given the

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[50] Does the force of the נָא carry through to the imperatives קוּם הִתְהַלֵּךְ in verse 17? Even if it does not, an inviting tone already has been set.

seriousness of the things she must not do, this seems unlikely: "please" would give too much redress. Instead, a translation like "You will need to avoid" or even "It is important that you avoid" is preferable. Both of these give just enough redress that Manoah's wife need not feel the full force of a "Thou shalt not" and yet not so much that she might interpret this as a mere suggestion.

<p style="text-align:center">נָא with the Negated Second-Person Jussive</p>

The negated second-person jussive takes the place of a negated imperative. Just as with the (unnegated) imperative, נָא has a softening effect, presenting the speaker's desire that the hearer not engage in an activity as a request, with redress. "Please do not do *x*" or (in a plea) "You mustn't do *x*" is a fitting translation.

As a potential difficult passage, we turn again to Judg 13:4. The angel of Yhwh says, הִשָּׁמְרִי נָא וְאַל־תִּשְׁתִּי ... וְאַל־תֹּאכְלִי, and the question to be asked is whether the *waw* on the negated jussives is conjunctive and the נָא does not carry through ("You'll need to be on your guard: do not drink . . . or eat"), whether it is conjunctive *and* the נָא carries through ("You'll need to be on your guard; whatever you do, just don't eat . . . or drink"), or whether it indicates that the jussives are indirect, in which case the נָא plays no role ("You'll need to be on your guard so that you not drink . . . or eat). Three possible interpretations result in three different translations.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This study began with a discussion of linguistic politeness. Speakers employ politeness

strategies to mitigate, or redress, threats to a hearer's positive face (the desire that one's

wants, beliefs, and actions be valued by others in some way) or negative face (the desire

that one's wants, beliefs, and actions not be hindered by others). The discussion then

turned to the particle נָא, which has been considered a negative politeness particle

(translated in English as "please"), as a particle of logical consequence, as a particle of

either emphatic or humble entreaty, and as an indicator of a proposal. Although נָא likely

has its origins in the Northwest Semitic energic *yaqtulV(n)na*, only usage in the corpus

surveyed can determine the meaning of נָא in that corpus.

The bulk of this paper therefore was devoted to a discussion of every instance of

נָא in the Pentateuch and Former Prophets. Although it appears that the discussion

assumes the following analysis, in fact the influence was mutual, and the discussion and

analysis chapters were regularly modified as each shed more light on the other. In the

end, it can be said that the particle נָא emphasizes the request-ness of a volitional. The

phrases הִנֵּה־נָא and אִם־נָא either anticipate a volitional with נָא or provide נָא where

syntactically it would be unpermitted, as do the interjections אַל־נָא and נָא. With the third-

person jussive, נָא presents the speaker's wish or desire as request that the hearer act. Such

123

requests are redressive by nature, in that the face-threatening act is posed to the hearer indirectly with the use of the third person. With the cohortative, נָא presents the speaker's own intent or resolution as a request for input or permission from the hearer. Since the speaker's desire to act may threaten the hearer's negative face, this construction provides redress by providing an opportunity for input—the hearer is invited to voice an objection. Contrary to a prevalent view, I see no need to add even more redress by mechanically translating נָא as "please."

The imperative functions differently. Unlike the jussive, it addresses the hearer directly, and unlike the cohortative, it presents an imposition of the speaker's will upon the hearer. נָא softens the imperative and offers redress by making the imperative sound more like a request. In some contexts "Please do *x*" is appropriate, but in others a weakly redressed "You need to do *x*" appears to be more appropriate. The amount of redress depends on the difference in distance and power between the hearer and speaker (cf. Brown and Levinson's formula on p. 7) and, possibly, on the use of other redress strategies—this is an area for further study.

Other questions can be explored. First, in terms of illocutionary force, the third-person jussive with נָא is comparable to the imperative with נָא: how do they differ, and why might a speaker choose to use the one over the other? Second, what is the meaning of the long imperative לְכָה (or הָבָה or קוּמָה) occur so often with a נָא-less volitional form? Do these three long imperatives provide redress? Third, what of the interjection אָנָּא?[1] Fourth, what are the politeness strategies in Hebrew?

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[1] Gen 50:17; Exod 32:31; 2 Kgs 20:3 (= Isa 38:3; spelled אָנָּה in both); Neh 1:5, 11; Jon 1:14 (spelled אָנָּה); 4:2 (spelled אָנָּה); Dan 9:4; Pss 116:4, 16 (spelled אָנָּה in both); 118:25 (*bis*). In all but Pss 116:4, 16, the utterance also contains a volitive with נָא.

Besides נָא one thinks of deferential אֲדֹנִי הַמֶּלֶךְ or בִּי אֲדֹנִי; expressions involving בְּעֵינֶיךָ

with either חֵן or טוֹב; the use of impersonal third-person address; self-abasing עַבְדְּךָ or

אֲמָתְךָ; and הֲלֹא,[2] but surely there are more. What Thomas has done for the letters needs to

be done for the biblical corpus.[3] And fifth, this thesis, which has examined only a portion

of the biblical prose corpus, needs to be extended to cover the entire prose corpus—as

well as the two instances of נָא in the Lachish Ostraca 3 and 6—including volitional forms

without נָא (something not done here for the imperative, and only partially for the jussive,

due to space constraints).

For now, though, it appears that the views of van der Merwe et al., *DCH*, and

HALOT, with which this paper opened, cannot be accepted. It is dangerous to claim that

the major works are wrong, and this study of נָא does precisely that. This study is not

above correction either, but it hopefully is closer to the truth.

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[2] H. A. Brongers, "Some Remarks on the Biblical Particle *halō*'," in *Remembering All the Way . . .: A Collection of Old Testament Studies Published on the Occasion of the Fortieth Anniversary of the Oudtestamentisch Werkgezelschap in Nederland*, ed. A. S. van der Woude (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 187–88.

[3] Benjamin Thomas, "The Language of Politeness in Ancient Hebrew Letters," *HS* 50 (2009): 17–39. See also Edward J. Bridge, "Polite Language in the Lachish Letters," *VT* 60 (2010): 518–34. Both writers focus on positive-face redress (via introductory wishes of well-being) and negative-face redress (via deferential terms, esp. the use of servant-lord language).

APPENDIX

נָא AT A GLANCE

A. הִנֵּה־נָא

- Indicates that a request is about to be made.

- Indicates the grounds for a following volitional request with נָא: "since" or

  "because" (alternatively, the volitional request clause may be preceded by "so").

B. אִם־נָא

- Nearly always occurs in the phrase אִם־נָא מָצָאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ (or similar).

- Indicates that a request is about to be made.

C. The Interjections נָא and אַל־נָא

- Attested too rarely to draw certain conclusions.

- Indicate that a request is about to be made.

D. נָא with the Third-Person Jussive

- A request that the hearer do something—either engage in an action or grant

  permission

- Negated (with אַל־נָא), a request that the hearer stop an action from happening or

  stop a state of affairs from coming about (or continuing to obtain). A sense of

  urgency is usually present.

- Politeness is provided by the indirectness of the third person.

F. נָא with the Cohortative

- Invites input from the hearer: "I would like to do *x*; what do you think?" "How about we do *x*?" "What do you all say we do *x*?"

- Requests permission from the hearer: "May I do *x*?" "Is it okay if I do *x*?"

- Politeness is provided by the appeal to the will of the hearer.

G. נָא with the Imperative

- Softens the force of an imperative: "I want you to do *x*," "You need to do *x*," "How about you do *x*?" "Won't/Could you do *x*?" "You can go ahead and do *x*," "Please do *x*."

- Politeness is provided by the particle itself. The translation will depend on such considerations as the nature of the request, the social statuses of the speaker and hearer, and the familiarity of the speaker and hearer.

H. נָא with the (Negated) Second-Person Jussive

- Softens the force of a negated imperative: "You mustn't do *x*," "Make sure you don't do *x*," "Please don't do *x*."

- Politeness is provided by the particle itself. A command that the hearer not do something is made to sound like a plea or request instead.

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