The Hebrew Particle אך

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The following points are mainly discussed in studies of this kind[1], and we will discuss them in the following order: 1) the etymology of אך, 2) the distribution of the word in classical Hebrew 3) the formal syntactical structures in which it occurs and 4) its meaning.

1 Etymology[2]

The particle אך belongs to the group of words outside the system of root consisting of three radicals. In other Semitic languages only a few comparable words have been found. BDB remarks s.v.: "perhaps from the same demonstrative root found also in כִּי, כֹּה, כֵּן". Waltke and O'Connor also group together the 'demonstrative adverbs' that show a formative element *k*: אך, אכן, כה and כן[3], although they also mention a 'series of restrictive adverbs in *k*'[4]. Driver thought of '*k*' as 'a limiting or restrictive element in Semitic languages in general'[5]. A combination comparable to the one in BDB is already to be found with Böttcher[6]. Treating of different demonstrative words he notes: "Dann mit ךָ im Auslaut אַךְ = ja, nur, eigentl. so (= nicht anders); die Abkürzung כְּ .. so und wie .. verlengd mit נ + prost. א: אכן, Erweichung zu כִּי". Eitan shows that the relation between אַךְ and אָכֵן was already supposed by Jona ibn Ganah (11th c.). The view, defended by Ewald, Stade and König, that אכן is to be explained as כן combined with a prostethic א is less likely according to Eitan. He himself chooses for the solution that אכן is a combination of אך and הן. אכן he then compares to arabic *lākin*, *lākinna*, which he explaines as: *la* + *ʾak* + *ʾin* (+ *na*). If this is correct we find here the only direct relative of Hebrew אך, as we have not found

[1]The choice of this subject was inspired by the traditional interest in the use and meaning of classical Hebrew particles maintained for many years by the members of the Oud Testamentisch Werkgezelschap in the Netherlands, cf. e.g. OTS xviii, 1973 and xxi, 1981; a shorter version of this paper was read in a session of the OTW in January 1998.

[2]Cf. for the following Barth, pp. 80–83, who also combined the pronominal *k* and the deictic *k*.

[3]Waltke & O'Connor, p. 307.

[4]Waltke & O'Connor, p. 670.

[5]Cf. Snaith, p. 225 n. 3.

[6]Böttcher i, p. 336.

other directly related words in Semitic. HAL points to Tigre *ʾakē*, without mentioning Tigrigna *ʾakkā* nor Amharic *ʾəkko* (HAH i points to te. *ʾakē* and *ʾakkē* 'wirklich, also', ge. *-kē*)[7]. The meaning of these words, 'surely' (while Amharic *ʾəkko* may also mean 'but'), differs somewhat from the meaning of Hebrew אך but the form with lengthened *k* poses such problems that a direct relationship need not necessarily be postulated. For אך one might, of course, think of a base *ʾakk*, in which the lengthening of *k* in Auslaut is not realised, it is difficult to prove, however. We should then probably have to think of a root with 3 radicals, *ʾkk*[8] or *ʾnk* (the derivation of the root נכי, supposed by Jastrow is highly improbable, whereas a derivation of the root *khy* 'become sad, weak' is also not acceptable).

A less direct relationship is, however, not improbable. HAL and others have mentioned a possible historical relationship of several words containing the so called deictic *k*, as e.g. *ky, kh, kn, ʾkn* and the pronominal element of the 2nd person[9].

Within the range of the Semitic languages we may mention the following forms:

Suffix pronouns of the 2nd p. sing. and plur. :

	s.m.	s.f.	pl.m.	pl.f.	dual
Akkadian:					
Gen.:	*-ka*	*-kī, -k*	*-kunu, -kun, -knu*	*-kina, -kin*	
Acc.:	*-ka*	*-ki*	*-kunūti*	*-kināti*	
Dat.:	*-ku(m)*	*-ki(m)*	*-kunuši(m)*	*-kināši(m)*	
Hebrew:	*-ka*	*-k*	*-kem*	*-ken*	
Arabic:	*-ka*	*-ki*	*-kum(u)*	*-kunna*	*-kumā*
Eth.:	*-ka*	*-ki*	*-kemmū*	*-kēn*	

Apart from the suffix pronouns there is another series of gen./acc. and dat. pronouns in Akkadian derived from the element *-k-* :

[7]These references not in HAH[17]; KB[3] only points to Tigre *ʾakē*.

[8]This is an old explanation, cf. e.g. Ioh. Simonis *Lexicon Manvale Hebraicvm et Chaldaicvm &c.*, Halae Magdebvrgicae, 1771, p. 45.

[9]Cf. e.g. Cowley, p. 296, Meyer, p. 13.

Gen./Acc. s.m.	*kâti, kâta (ku(w)āti)*	s.f. *kê2ti (ku(w)āti)*
Dat.	*kâšim*	*kaši(m)*
Gen./Acc. pl.m.	*kunūti*	
Dat.	*kunūši(m)*	

Outside Semitic the *k*-element as suffix of the 2nd p. is also found in Egyptian: *-k*. The forms with *-t* for fem. sing. and plur. show palatalisation of the same original *k*, which indicates that the ending *-i* in the Semitic form of the suffix fem. sing. is probably old and may be dated in a period before Egyptian and Semitic began to develop separately. This *k*- element is also attested in Cushitic languages, cf. e.g. Bedja suff. 2sg m *-ka*, 2sg f *-ki*, Bedawye in the separate pronouns: 2ms: *ba-r-ūk*, 2fs: *ba-t-ūk* 2mpl: *ba-rā-kn-a* 2fpl: *ba-tā-kn-a*. Reinisch explains the *-k-* element in these personal pronouns as a remnant of an original verbal root *kwn*. We suppose that the relation with the deictic element *k* is more probable[10]. It is, of course, also possible that remnants of the root *kwn* and the deictic element have influenced each other.

In Hebrew and Akkadian this *k* element is also found in the separate pronoun of the 1st p. sing.: *anāku*, resp. אָנֹכִי. Akkadian also uses this element in the formation of the stative form of the 1st p. sing.: *šarr-ā-kū*. The *k*-element used to indicate the 1st pers. sing. is further attested in other Afro-Asiatic languages: cf. e.g. the ending of the 1st p. sing. stative ('old perfective') *-kwy* in Egyptian and the separate pronoun *ink* in the same language. According to some the same element is also found in the verbal conjugation in Berber, but this is less likely.

The pronominal *k* element is developed by means of different elements indicating gender, number and in a few languages case. Some of these elements are found also in the nominal morphology, as e.g. the plural morphemes *m, n*.

Outside the pronominal system many other words may be derived from a deictic element *k*. Akkadian is particularly rich in this type of formation, cf. e.g.[11]:

akanna 'here' n/spB
  akannaka / akannakunu (*akanna* + *-ka* or *-kunu*) 'there'
akanni 'now' m/n/A
akia 'so, thus' (introducing direct speech)

[10] Cf. e.g. Castellino, p. 12.
[11] Cf. e.g. *GAG*, par. 118ff.

akkā'i 'how ?'
  akkā'ikī (*akkā'i* + *-kī*) 'how much?'
akukia ... akukia 'either .... or'
ammaki/u 'that'
ka
  ajjikâ 'where, whereto'
    ajjikâma (*ajjikâ* + *ma*) 'somewhere'
  ēkâ 'where ?'
    ēkânu (*ēkâ* + *ānu*) 'where ?'
kâm
  kâmma 'thus'
  ajjaka(m) (*ajju* + *kâm*) 'where ?'
    ajjakamma (*ajjakam* + *ma*) 'somewhere'
kī prep. 'as' adverb 'how ?' conj. 'as, when', 'that'
kē 'how'
  kīam, kêm, kia, kījam (*kī* + *-am*)
    ajjikiam (*ajju* + *kiam*) 'where ?'
    ēkiam 'whereto'
    annīkīam, annakam
    ullīkīam
    ammakam
    ašrakīam, ašrakam
  akī, akkī (*ana kī*) 'as'
  a(k)kē, ikkē 'as'
    akānu (*akī* + *ānu*) 'hither'
    akanna (*akī annî* 'as this') 'so' introducing direct speech (only mB)
    akannu variant form of *akanna*
kūm(u) 'instead of'

Hebrew:

-כְּ 'as'
כָּהּ (v. supra)
כֹּה 'so'
כִּי 'that'[12]
כָּכָה 'so'
כְּמוֹ 'as'
כֵּן 'thus'
combinations with *ʾē-*

[12] Brockelmann, *Grundriss*, p. 614, describes *kī* as an original interjection.

אֵיךְ 'how ?', according to many a shortened form of אֵיכָה 'how' also written: אֵי־כָה
אֵיכֹה 'where ?'
אֵיכָכָה 'how ?'
אָכֵן i 'surely, but'
אָכֵן ii 'so that'

Arabic:

ka- 'as'
kaʾayyin > *kayyin* 'how much !'
kam 'how much ?, how much !' [13]
kay 'in order that, that' [14]; this word is commonly related to Hebrew כְּדֵי
likay 'in order that'
kaymā 'that, in order that'
likaymā 'that, in order that'
lākin 'but'
lākinna 'but'
dāka 'that' (demonstrative)
hādāka
dālika
hunāka, *hunālika* 'there'

Ethiopic

kama [15] (Ge.) 'that'
kem (Tigre) 'that'
kam (Tigrigna) 'that'
kamaze (Tigrigna) 'that'
ke (Ge.) 'that'
ka (Tigre) 'then'
zekū (Ge.) 'that' (demonstrative)

If correct, it will be necessary to collect more material, also from non-Semitic Afro-Asiatic languages. For this moment we will only mention: Egyptian *k3*, 'thus', *ky*, 'other', Koptic *ke*, 'or', *ke*, 'other', Berber *ka*, interrogative particle (Senhadja), *-ka*, strengthening particle following an imperative (Tazerwalt), *akka*, 'thus' (Iržen, Zemmur), *ak*, negative particle (Ghadames), *akk*, 'every' (Ait Seghrušen, Iržen, Ghadames), *ki*, invariable

[13] The noun *kamm* 'quantity' is probably secundary, derived from *kam* 'how much' and not related to a verbal root (the verb *kamma* means 'to cover').
[14] Explained as *ka* + *ʾay* by e.g. Reckendorf, par. 240.
[15] Brockelmann, *Grundriss*, p. 613.

indefinite pronoun and relative particle (Ghadames); Haussa *kā*, marker of relativity, *ke*, strengthening particle, introducing a clause, *ko*, introduction of an interrogative clause 'perhaps', 'even', *ko*, prefix meaning 'every', 'all'; Somali *ka, ki, ku, ko*, article / demonstrative, *kî*, 'which' *ká*, 'in', *kü*, 'from'.

When the above is correct, Hebrew אך and the words mentioned from Ethiopian languages may have originated through adaptation of the same base. An extensive study of this deictic element and its developments in Afro-Asiatic might further our understanding of the etymology of *ʾak*[16].

Perhaps it is useful to point out that we do not suppose that all these words from the different languages mentioned may be related to each other directly. Compare e.g. the interesting case of the closely related Hebrew and Phoenician languages. It seems probable that the equivalent of Hebrew כִּי at least in the later form of Phoenician, Punic (Neo-Punic) was realised as */ka/* or */kō/*[17]. Historically this last mentioned word may be the same as Hebrew כָּה, כֹּה. A separate development, however, may easily have lead to these forms with their different meanings.

For the formations not combined with other morphemes, one might think of an original deictic *k*, that, placed directly before a noun and forming an accent unity with it, was realised as *kV*, later moving to a realisation */ka-/* or */ki-/*, while *k* as a word with only secondary stress before a noun evolved to *'ak*. The first of these two is, of course, the preposition, explained by Wright[18] not as an original preposition: "*ka*, *as, like* (Heb. Aram. כְּ), which is commonly reckoned a preposition, is really not so. It is a formally undeveloped noun, which occurs only as the governing word in the genetive connection, but runs in this position through all the relations of case (*similitudo, instar*)". Another development occurred when the same element was used with primary accentuation. In this case a form $kV\bar{}$ evolved: *kā* developing to *kō* in several languages. Note that Hebrew as well as Punic preserved both forms: *kā* and *kō*.

2 The distribution.

As many words, also the so called structure words, אך is distributed unevenly in Biblical Hebrew. The total number of attestations is 160 according to DCH, while other counts come to one more attestation, not

[16] I.M. Diakonoff, p. 69ff.
[17] K. Jongeling in *Festschrift Hospers*, p. 100 ff.
[18] Wright[3] i, p. 280.

counting, of course, those cases in which according to Eitan the element *ʾak* forms part of לכן and also leaving aside instances of אך arising from text emendation[19].

תורה		נביאים ראשונים		נביאים אחרונים		כתובים	
Gen	14	Jos	2	Jes	10	Ps	24
Ex	5	Jud	6	Jer	15	Job	11
Lev	8	i Sam	11	Ez	1	Prv	7
Num	11	ii Sam	3	Hos	3	Thr	2
Dt	5	i Reg	6	Jon	1	Es	1
		ii Reg	9	Zef	2	i Ch	1
				Zac	1	ii Ch	2
	43		37		33		48

From this distribution one gets the impression that there is a slight preference for older texts, and a little more outspoken preference for prophetic and poetic literature. The difference between Chronicles, as compared to Samuel and Kings, is interesting, but perhaps not really statistically significant. It is possible that the difference is rather the result of the way the Chronicler edited his material. Striking is also the distribution over the different prophetic books. The fact that אך is attested 33 times in prophetic books and 42 times in the poetic books Ps., Job and Prv. must be related to the use of רק which has a meaning comparable to אך. Also רק is unevenly distributed and its frequency in prophetic and poetic literature is especially low: "Le mot רק ne se rencontre guère dans les livres prophétiques et poétiques"[20]. A few times they occur together, so one cannot really speak of complementary distribution of the two words.

3 Syntax.

The first thing that we note when looking at the structures in which אך may be used, is that in the majority of cases it is used at the beginning of a clause. Only in 23 of the 161 attestations is it used in another place in the clause. This may, perhaps, be related to the deictic origin of the word. A second point is that in a large number of cases where אך is used it is in a

[19] Cf. e.g. Jer. iii 20 where instead of אכן an emendation to -כ אך has been proposed by Holladay and accepted by e.g. Waltke & O'Connor, p. 641 note.

[20] B. Jongeling, 1973.

context of 1) direct speech (114 attestations, in 20 cases אך forms the begin of the direct speech), or 2) law (16 instances in which the law is given in the 2nd per., thus as direct speech (twice אך forms the beginning of the text), and 5 instances of law in the 3d pers.), together 135, leaving only 26 cases of indirect speech[21]. This feature of the distribution of אך gives the impression that the use of this word brings with it a feeling of extra emotion, liveliness or something like this for the reader of the text. Supposing that poetic texts normally give the same impression, also when formally indirect speech is used, 8 more instances of אך (2 in Psalms and 6 in Proverbs) belong to the same group, leaving us with only 18 instances of אך in indirect speech. Apart from the interesting fact that 6 of these 18 instances are to be found in ii Kings (in which book only 3 other attestations of אך are to be found) nothing much can be said about these cases: in 8 instances אך introduces a preposed subject and in 5 instances the normal word order is used.

Because it is the smaller number of cases we first study אך when it is not at the beginning of a clause.

3.1 אך not at the beginning of a clause[22].

Previous to the discussion of the structures in which אך enters in this position a note on the distribution. It is striking that 6 out of the 23 instances are to be found in the book of Proverbs. אך occurs 7 times in Proverbs and in only one of them אך is the first word of the clause and 6 are of the opposite type. Compare e.g. Psalms where not one of the 24 attestations belongs to this category. Partly this is due to the repetition of a set expression, viz. אַךְ־לְמַחְסוֹר 'only to want', which occurs 4 times (Prov. xi 24, xiv 23, xxi 5, xxii 16), once in a parallel construction matched by אַךְ־לְמוֹתָר in the same order (xxi 5). This construction is interesting because the combination אך + ל is not very frequent. The four cases in Proverbs are all built on the same pattern: a nominal clause consisting of a subject followed by the predicate אַךְ־לְמַחְסוֹר. The only problem found in this construction is the question whether the logical subject in this part of the clause (the one having some lack or want) need to be the same as the

[21] Muraoka, p. 130, relates the supposed asseverative meaning of אך to its colloquial use, for which there is no basis, seeing the great number of attestations occurring in direct speech, where the meaning 'only' or 'but' is unquestionable.

[22] Gen. vii 23; xviii 32; Ex. x 17; Dt. xvi 15; xxviii 29; Jud. vi 39; xvi 28; i Sam. xviii 8; xxi 5; ii Sam. xxiii 10; i Reg. xi 39; Jes. xvi 7; Jer. x 24; xxxii 30 (twice); Zeph. i 18; Prov. xi 23; 24; xiv 23; xxi 5 (twice); xxii 16; Job xix 13.

subject of the clause as a whole.

Prov. xi 24: יֵשׁ מְפַזֵּר וְנוֹסָף עוֹד וְחוֹשֵׂךְ מִישֶׁר אַךְ־לְמַחְסוֹר 'one man gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want'; the subject of the clause is the logical subject of the want;

Prov. xiv 23: בְּכָל־עֶצֶב יִהְיֶה מוֹתָר וּדְבַר־שְׂפָתַיִם אַךְ־לְמַחְסוֹר 'in all toil there is profit, but mere talk tends only to want'; the owner of the subject of the clause is the logical subject of the want;

Prov. xxi 5: מַחְשְׁבוֹת חָרוּץ אַךְ־לְמוֹתָר וְכָל־אָץ אַךְ־לְמַחְסוֹר 'the plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to want; the subject of the clause is the logical subject of the want. This is, as far as the translation is concerned, an interesting example. אך occurring twice is once translated by means of 'surely' in RSV and the other time by 'only'. We would rather translate: the thoughts of a diligent man lead only to profit, those of a hurried one only to poverty.

In these three instances it is clear that both subjects refer to the same person, albeit that in the second case it is not the subject of the clause, but rather the logical subject referred to by 'word' and 'lips', i.e. the one who speaks which coincides with the logical subject of the second part of the clause[23].

Prov. xxii: 16 עֹשֵׁק דָּל לְהַרְבּוֹת לוֹ נֹתֵן לְעָשִׁיר אַךְ־לְמַחְסוֹר 'he who oppresses the poor to increase his own wealth, or gives to the rich, will only come to want'. In this case there is a difference of opinion. In the translation of e.g. the NBG the logical subject of the two predicates refers to the object of the preposition ל in the first half of the clause: he who oppresses the poor one brings him (i.e. the poor one) gain, and he who gives to a rich man brings about only his (i.e. the rich man's) poverty. The problem is caused by the prepositional phrase לוֹ in the first clause. Is it possible that the suffix refers to the אשׁק instead of the דָּל ? As the use of ל with a reflexive function is well attested this seems to be no problem while the supposition that in this case the logical subject in אַךְ־לְמַחְסוֹר refers to the object of a preposition and in the other examples to the subject of the clause indicates that the now accepted translation is the more probable one. Plöger[24] who translates "Wer dem Reichen gibt hat nur verlust" states that the other translation is

[23] The same situation may be supposed for Prov. xxi 5 in case the subject of the second clause is to be understood, because of the parallelism, as elliptical for "the thoughts of a hurried person".

[24] Plöger, p. 252.

impossible because of the comparison with Prov. xi 24 and xxi 5. Although we accept this translation we are not quite sure whether one can be certain that the other one is really impossible. As others have remarked there is no real basis for the traditional translation although it seems to be much more profound than the accepted one. For completeness sake we quote here the few other instances of אַךְ + ל.

i Sam xxv 21: וְדָוִד אָמַר אַךְ לַשָּׁקֶר שָׁמַרְתִּי אֶת־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר לָזֶה בַּמִּדְבָּר וְלֹא־נִפְקַד מִכָּל־אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ מְאוּמָה וַיָּשֶׁב־לִי רָעָה תַּחַת טוֹבָה 'now David had said, "Surely in vain have I guarded all that this fellow has in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that belongend to him, and he has returned me evil for good".' This, however, is not in a nominal clause, as אַךְ introduces a preposed prepositional phrase in a verbal clause.

ii Sam xxiii 10: הוּא קָם וַיַּךְ בַּפְּלִשְׁתִּים עַד כִּי־יָגְעָה יָדוֹ וַתִּדְבַּק יָדוֹ אֶל־הַחֶרֶב וַיַּעַשׂ יְיָ תְּשׁוּעָה גְדוֹלָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא וְהָעָם יָשֻׁבוּ אַחֲרָיו אַךְ־לְפַשֵּׁט 'he rose and struck down the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand cleaved to the sword; and the Lord wrought a great victory that day; and the men returned after him only to strip the slain'. The element dependent of אַךְ is adverbial in character, ל + infinitive: the people returned after him, only to plunder.

In the preceding instances אַךְ only relates to the following word or word group. The other examples of a not preposed אַךְ are the following:

Gen. vii 23: וַיִּשָּׁאֵר אַךְ־נֹחַ וַאֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ בַּתֵּבָה 'only Noah was left, and those that were with him in the ark'. אַךְ relates to the subject of the verbal clause, which follows the verbal form;

Gen. xviii 32: אַךְ only relates to the adverbial הַפַּעַם 'this time', אַךְ־הַפַּעַם 'only this time', thus also in Ex. x 17, Jud vi 39 (where in the same verse רַק הַפַּעַם is attested) and Jud xvi 28.

In Dt. xvi 15 וְהָיִיתָ אַךְ שָׂמֵחַ 'you shall keep the feast with joy'[25] it is the predicate of the verb היה that is the object of אַךְ; the same is the case in Dt. xxviii 29: וְהָיִיתָ אַךְ עָשׁוּק וְגָזוּל כָּל־הַיָּמִים וְאֵין מוֹשִׁיעַ 'and you shall be only oppressed and robbed, continually, and there shall be no one to help you'[26]. In i Sam. xviii 8: וְעוֹד לוֹ אַךְ הַמְּלוּכָה, literaly: and for him, there is still only kingship, אַךְ governs the subject of the nominal clause. In the NEB translation: 'what more can they do but make him king ?' 'but' is an attractive translation of אַךְ ; the translation favoured by the NBG: 'also

[25] Although we would rather translate: And (during the feast) you may only be happy.
[26] We would rather translate: The only thing you will have left is oppression ....

the kingship will be his'[27] seems less appropriate. The meaning seems to be: the only thing which is lacking to him is kingship.

In i Sam. xxi 5 אַךְ governs a prepositional phrase: וַיַּעַן הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־דָּוִד וַיֹּאמֶר אֵין־לֶחֶם חֹל אֶל־תַּחַת יָדִי כִּי־אִם־לֶחֶם קֹדֶשׁ יֵשׁ אִם־נִשְׁמְרוּ הַנְּעָרִים אַךְ מֵאִשָּׁה 'and the priest answered David, "I have no common bread at hand, but there is holy bread; if only the young men have kept themselves from women'. Although the use of יֵשׁ in this verse is not really easily described, the use of אַךְ seems to strengthen the function of the following preposition מִן. The combination אַךְ + מִן further occurs in Ps. lxii 5, see further below. For another example of אַךְ followed by a prepositional phrase, cf. Jer. x 24.

In i Reg xi 39: וְאֶעַנֶּה אֶת־זֶרַע דָּוִד לְמַעַן זֹאת אַךְ לֹא כָל־הַיָּמִים 'and I will for this afflict the descendants of David, but not for ever', it seems to be the negated adverbial expression כָּל־הַיָּמִים, which is determined by אַךְ. It is, however, also possible to explain אַךְ לֹא כָל־הַיָּמִים as an elliptical construction.

In Jes. xvi 7 אַךְ relates to the next word, but the construction and the interpretation of the clause as a whole is difficult: לָכֵן יְיֵלִיל מוֹאָב לְמוֹאָב כֻּלּוֹ יְיֵלִיל לַאֲשִׁישֵׁי קִיר־חֶרֶשֶׁת תֶּהְגּוּ אַךְ־נְכָאִים, 'therefore let Moab wail, let everyone wail for Moab. Mourn, utterly stricken, for the raisin-cakes of Kir-hareseth'. Whatever the correct interpretation may be, it seems clear that at least one of the possibilities is to suppose that אַךְ־נְכָאִים is an apposition describing the subject enclosed in the finite verbal form תֶּהְגּוּ: תֶּהְגּוּ אַךְ־נְכָאִים 'you will mourn, being nothing more than crushed people'. The other possibility is to explain אַךְ־נְכָאִים as an apposition to the object of the verbal form, cf. NEB: he shall mourn for the prosperous farmers of Kir-hareseth, utterly ruined.

In Prov. xi 23 אַךְ introduces the predicate of the nominal clause: תַּאֲוַת צַדִּיקִים אַךְ־טוֹב תִּקְוַת רְשָׁעִים עֶבְרָה 'the desire of the righteous ends only in good'; the second half of the verse exhibits the same construction, but without אַךְ : 'the expectation of the wicked in wrath'.

Also the predicate of a verbal clause with the verb הָיָה may be introduced by אַךְ, cf. the first אַךְ in Jer. xxxii 30: כִּי־הָיוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל וּבְנֵי יְהוּדָה אַךְ עֹשִׂים הָרַע בְּעֵינַי מִנְּעֻרֹתֵיהֶם כִּי בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אַךְ מַכְעִסִים אֹתִי בְּמַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵיהֶם נְאֻם־יְיָ 'For the sons of Israel and the sons of Judah have done nothing but evil in my sight from their youth; the sons of Israel have done nothing but provoke me to anger by the work of their hands, says the Lord'. The second

[27] In Dutch: 'ook het koningschap zal nog voor hem zijn'.

אך in this passage introduces the predicate of a nominal clause.

In Job xix 13 אך relates to the verb in a clause with a preposed subject אַחַי מֵעָלַי הִרְחִיק וְיֹדְעַי אַךְ־זָרוּ מִמֶּנִּי 'he has put my brethren far from me, and my acquaintances are wholly estranged from me'; as in the preceding example we have two half-verses with the same construction in which only one element is preceded by אך which stresses the difference and contrast between the two ideas thus connected. It is interesting to note in this verbal clause two stress-devices are used at the same time: a preposed subject and the introduction of the verb by אך. Is this a highly literary construction or proof that classical Hebrew is a VSO language ?

Interesting is Zeph. i 18: גַּם־כַּסְפָּם גַּם־זְהָבָם לֹא־יוּכַל לְהַצִּילָם בְּיוֹם עֶבְרַת יְיָ וּבְאֵשׁ קִנְאָתוֹ תֵּאָכֵל כָּל־הָאָרֶץ כִּי־כָלָה אַךְ־נִבְהָלָה יַעֲשֶׂה אֵת כָּל־יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ 'Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them on the day of the wrath of the Lord. In the fire of his jealous wrath, all the earth shall be consumed; for a full, yea, sudden end he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth.' When כָּלָה אַךְ־נִבְהָלָה means 'an end, and that only one that comes suddenly' this is the only attestation of אך as part of a clause element not being the first word of this element. If, as some have thought, this text should be in need of emendation, it may be advisable to reconstruct a text in which אך is at least the first word of a clause constituent.

Two attestations of אך might seem to belong this category: in Job xxiii 6 אך relates to the pronominal subject: הַבְרָב־כֹּחַ יָרִיב עִמָּדִי לֹא אַךְ־הוּא יָשֶׂם בִּי 'would he contend with me in the greatness of his power ? No; he would give heed to me'. It is, however, better not to take לא as part of the clause in the second half of the verse, and therefore this is an example of a preposed pronominal subject introduced by אך, for which see below.

The other one we find in Num. xii 2, where the first few words of the clause read הֲרַק אַךְ־בְּמֹשֶׁה דִּבֶּר יְיָ 'has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses ?'. As we do not count the interrogative particle in the question whether a word is in the first place of a clause, the reason that אך is not in first place is occasioned by the combination with רק. However, this last word having a meaning and use comparable to אך, it is more attractive to describe רַק אַךְ as a unity and to decide that in this case it forms part of an expression which is found in the first place of the clause.

Of the genuine cases of אך not at the beginning of a clause eight are found in nominal clauses, ten in verbal ones and one in an elliptical construction (i Reg xi 39). The examples show that in these clause types אך

most probably may relate to every element of the clause.

3.2 אך at the beginning of a clause.

We will differentiate in the following according to the function of the element at the beginning of the clause and the order of the clause as a whole.

3.2.1 אך followed by a clause in normal order.

When a clause in normal word order follows אך, a frequently occurring subtype of the attestations of אך at the beginnig of a clause, it is sometimes difficult to decide what is the extent of the influence of the particle.

3.2.1.1 אך followed by a nominal clause[28].

In several instances there are no real problems for the interpretation, as e.g. in ii Reg. xviii 20 (= Jes. xxxvi 5): אָמַרְתָּ אַךְ־דְּבַר־שְׂפָתַיִם עֵצָה וּגְבוּרָה לַמִּלְחָמָה 'do you think that mere words are strategy and power for war ?', where אך governs the subject of the nominal clause which consists of the two words to which it is connected by maqqef: nothing more than words. The translation of DCH: 'apart from words, is there a plan' seems less attractive but this may be more a question of the English than a difference in interpretation of the original.

In Ps. lxii 3 (= 7): אַךְ־הוּא צוּרִי וְיִשׁוּעָתִי מִשְׂגַּבִּי לֹא־אֶמּוֹט רַבָּה 'He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be greatly moved', it seems most appropriate to suppose that אך governs only the pronominal subject הוּא.

In Ps. lxxiii 1: מִזְמוֹר לְאָסָף אַךְ טוֹב לְיִשְׂרָאֵל אֱלֹהִים לְבָרֵי לֵבָב 'A psalm of Asaph. Truly God is good to Israel[29], to those who are pure in heart', אך introduces the predicate of a nominal clause. Snaith[30] points out that אך is used because of the contrast between this verse and the description of the wicked who prosper: God is good in spite of the prosperity of the wicked.

Ps. lxxxv 10: אַךְ קָרוֹב לִירֵאָיו יְשׁוּעָתוֹ לִשְׁכֹּן כָּבוֹד בְּאַרְצֵנוּ 'surely his salvation

[28] Gen. xxvi 9; Jud. iii 24; i Sam. xvi 6; ii Reg. xviii 20; Jes. xxxvi 5; Jer. x 19; xix 4; xlv 14; Ps. xxxix 6, 12; lviii 12 (twice); lxii 3, 7, 10; Job xviii 21; Lam. ii 16.

[29] Following the Masoretic text and the footnote in RSV.

[30] Snaith, p. 223.

is at hand for those who fear him, that glory may dwell in our land'. In this passage אך governs only the predicate. The psalmist asks the Lord to be favourable towards his people again, and then goes on to describe how this agreeable situation is at hand, but only for those who fear him. An explanation as: his salvation is only at hand for those who fear him, seems therefore more acceptable then RSV.

In Ps. lviii 12: וְיֹאמַר אָדָם אַךְ־פְּרִי לַצַּדִּיק אַךְ יֵשׁ־אֱלֹהִים שֹׁפְטִים בָּאָרֶץ 'Men will say, "Surely there is a reward for the righteous; surely there is a God who judges on earth' it is clear that the second אך governs the whole nominal clause introduced by יֵשׁ, which makes it perhaps a little bit more plausible to suppose this structure also for the first אך-clause. The supposition that אך only governs the subject פְּרִי cannot be disproved, however. The translation 'surely' is not appropriate in this case. The poet wants to stress the difference between what one normally observes on earth (as described in the verses 2 - 6) and the ideal situation when God takes things in his own hands (verses 7-10)[31]. The NEB translation is better therefore: 'there is after all a reward for the righteous; after all, there is a God that judges on earth'.

In Job xviii 21: אַךְ־אֵלֶּה מִשְׁכְּנוֹת עַוָּל וְזֶה מְקוֹם לֹא־יָדַע־אֵל 'surely such are the dwellings of the ungodly, such is the place of him who knows not God', it is also difficult to decide whether אך governs the clause, as is done by Snaith[32]: against what one might think, or only the subject of the nominal clause: 'only these are the dwellings of evildoers ..'. The regular use of אך as the first word of direct speech gives us the opportunity to interpret this verse as direct speech laid in the mouth of the people in the preceding verse.

In Gen. xx 12: וְגַם־אָמְנָה אֲחֹתִי בַת־אָבִי הִוא אַךְ לֹא בַת־אִמִּי וַתְּהִי־לִי לְאִשָּׁה 'Besides she is indeed my sister, the daughter of my father but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife'. The easiest explanation is to suppose that אַךְ לֹא בַת־אִמִּי is an elliptical construction for אַךְ לֹא בַת־אִמִּי הִוא. In that case אך governs the whole following nominal clause[33].

In Jer. x 19: אוֹי לִי עַל־שִׁבְרִי נַחְלָה מַכָּתִי וַאֲנִי אָמַרְתִּי אַךְ זֶה חֳלִי וְאֶשָּׂאֶנּוּ 'woe is me because of my hurt ! My wound is grievous. But I said, "Truly this is an affliction and I must bear it', the three words אַךְ זֶה חֳלִי form a nominal clause introduced by אך. Whether this אך governs the clause or only the subject זֶה is difficult to say. One is tempted to translate: 'Woe is

[31] Cf. also Snaith, p. 223.
[32] Snaith ibid.
[33] Cf. also Gen. xxvi 9.

me because of my hurt; grievous is my wound, therefore I say: only this, my affliction there is, and I have to bear it'. אַךְ זֶה also occurs in Lam. ii 16: פָּצוּ עָלַיִךְ פִּיהֶם כָּל־אוֹיְבַיִךְ שָׁרְקוּ וַיַּחֲרְקוּ־שֵׁן אָמְרוּ בָּלַעְנוּ אַךְ זֶה הַיּוֹם שֶׁקִּוִּינָהוּ מָצָאנוּ רָאִינוּ 'all your enemies rail against you; they hiss, they gnash their teeth, they cry: "We have destroyed her ! Ah, this is the day we longed for; now we have it; we see it !" '.

In Jud. iii 24: דַּלְתוֹת הָעֲלִיָּה נְעוּלוֹת וַיֹּאמְרוּ אַךְ מֵסִיךְ הוּא אֶת־רַגְלָיו בַּחֲדַר הַמְּקֵרָה 'when he had gone, the servants came; and when they saw that the doors of the roof chamber were locked, they thought, "He is only relieving himself in the closet of the cool chamber".' Although formally this is a nominal clause, the relation of אך to the following participle is comparable to that between אך and following finite verbal forms discussed below.

3.2.1.2 אך followed by a verbal clause[34].

In this construction the question whether only the following verb or the whole of the clause is governed by אך is mostly irrelevant because of the character of the verbal clause. In a few instances one might, however, have to choose for the one or the other solution. אך seems to govern the verb only in Gen. xxvii 13: וַתֹּאמֶר לוֹ אִמּוֹ עָלַי קִלְלָתְךָ בְּנִי אַךְ שְׁמַע בְּקֹלִי וְלֵךְ קַח־לִי 'His mother said to him, "Upon me be your curse, my son; only obey my word, and go, fetch them to me". As the clause in this case, apart from the verb, only exists of a prepositional phrase related in meaning to the verb this solution is not indisputable. This situation occurs also in Gen. xxxiv 23. Other examples of אך followed by an imperative are to be found in i Sam. xii 24, xviii 17, i Reg. xvii 13, ii Reg. v 7, Jer. iii 13, xxviii 7, xxxiv 4. All these passages indicate a contrast or restriction with the preceding information. When a clause only consists of a verbal form there is no problem as to what is governed by אך, of course, cf. e.g. Hos. xii 9: וַיֹּאמֶר אֶפְרַיִם אַךְ עָשַׁרְתִּי מָצָאתִי אוֹן לִי כָּל־יְגִיעַי לֹא יִמְצְאוּ־לִי עָוֹן אֲשֶׁר־חָטָא 'Ephraim has said, "Ah, but I am rich, I have gained wealth for myself"; but all his riches can never offset the guilt he has incurred'. In ii Reg. xii 14: אַךְ לֹא יֵעָשֶׂה בֵּית יְיָ סִפוֹת כֶּסֶף מְזַמְּרוֹת 'but there were not made for the house of the Lord basins of silver, snuffers, ...' אך governs the whole clause[35].

In i Sam. xii 20: וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁמוּאֵל אֶל־הָעָם אַל־תִּירָאוּ אַתֶּם עֲשִׂיתֶם אֶת

[34] Gen. xxvii 13; xxxiv 23; Jud. x 15; i Sam. i 23; xii 20, 24; xviii 17; i Reg. xvii 13; ii Reg. v 7; xii 14; xiii 6; xxii 7; xxiii 9, 26, 35; Jes. xliii 24; Jer ii 35; iii 13; xxviii 7; xxxiv 4; Hos. xii 9; Jon. ii 5; Zef. iii 7; Job xxxiii 8; i Chr. xxii 12.

[35] Cf. also Jud. x 15; i Sam. i 23; ii Reg. xxiii 26, 35; Jes. xliii 24.

כָּל־הָרָעָה הַזֹּאת אַךְ אַל־תָּסוּרוּ מֵאַחֲרֵי יְיָ וַעֲבַדְתֶּם אֶת־יְיָ בְּכָל־לְבַבְכֶם 'and Samuel said to the people, "Fear not; you have done all this evil, yet do not turn aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart', we have an example of אך followed by a negated verbal form. For אך followed by a finite verbal form negated by לא, cf. ii Reg. xiii 6, xxii 7, xxiii 9.

In Jer. ii 35: וַתֹּאמְרִי כִּי נְקִיתִי אַךְ שָׁב אַפּוֹ מִמֶּנִּי הִנְנִי נִשְׁפָּט אוֹתָךְ עַל־אָמְרֵךְ לֹא חָטָאתִי 'you say, 'I am innocent; surely his anger has turned from me.' Behold I will bring you to judgment for saying, 'I have not sinned'.' This also seems to be an example of אך having some contrastive notion, whereas the asseverative meaning in this sentence is to be found in the introductory כי. The defiant speaker says: 'I am certainly innocent, and against what you might think his anger has turned from me'.

Jon. ii 5: וַאֲנִי אָמַרְתִּי נִגְרַשְׁתִּי מִנֶּגֶד עֵינֶיךָ אַךְ אוֹסִיף לְהַבִּיט אֶל־הֵיכַל קָדְשֶׁךָ poses a problem. Most commentators and translators read *ʾēk* instead of *ʾak* 'then I said, 'I am cast out from thy presence; how shall I again look upon thy holy temple?', because it is felt that the second half of the verse cannot be in direct contrast to the first half. When we compare this passage to verse 8 in the same chapter, where the prophet says: 'and my prayer came to thee, into thy holy temple' one wonders whether one should not retain the text as it is and translate, with some older translations: but I will see your holy temple again'.

Zef. iii 7: אָמַרְתִּי אַךְ־תִּירְאִי אוֹתִי תִּקְחִי מוּסָר וְלֹא־יִכָּרֵת מְעוֹנָהּ כֹּל אֲשֶׁר־פָּקַדְתִּי עָלֶיהָ אָכֵן הִשְׁכִּימוּ הִשְׁחִיתוּ כֹּל עֲלִילוֹתָם 'I said, 'Surely she will fear me, she will accept correction and her dwelling will not be cut off from all that I have enjoined upon her.' But all the more they were eager to make all their deeds corrupt.' אך governs the following clause(s) and stresses the contrast[36] between the two clauses following and the description of desolation in verse 6. One might translate as in NEB: 'I said: 'Do but fear me and take my rebuke at heart' ...'.

Job xxxiii 8: אַךְ אָמַרְתָּ בְאָזְנָי וְקוֹל מִלִּין אֶשְׁמָע 'Surely you have spoken in my hearing, and I have heard the sound of your words'. As the two half verses are strongly tied together in a chiastic construction, it is most probable that אך governs both clauses in this verse. The function of אך is again an indication of contrast. In the preceding eight verses Elihu has introduced himself as a worthy but not overawing antagonist. In this passage the actual discussion is taken up again, Elihu recalling in the verses 8–11

[36] Cf. also Snaith, p. 224.

that Job has called himself innocent, whereas he himself in the verses 12ff. will pronounce the guilt of Job. One might translate: 'However, you have spoken to my ears and I have heard the sound of your words'.

i Chr. xxii 12 : אַךְ יִתֶּן־לְךָ יְיָ שֵׂכֶל וּבִינָה וְיצַוְּךָ עַל־יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלִשְׁמוֹר אֶת־תּוֹרַת יְיָ אֱלֹהֶיךָ 'Only, may the Lord grant you discretion and understanding, that when he gives you charge over Israel you may keep the law of the Lord your God'. אך governs the following clause.

3.2.2 אך preceding a preposed clause element.

In the many attestations of the use of אך introducing a preposed clause element one might expect that it is only this element that is governed by it. Therefore we will especially mention those cases where another interpretation seems more appropriate.

3.2.2.1 Preposed subject[37].

We give only a few examples. In i Sam. xxix 9: וַיַּעַן אָכִישׁ וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־דָּוִד יָדַעְתִּי כִּי טוֹב אַתָּה בְּעֵינַי כְּמַלְאַךְ אֱלֹהִים אַךְ שָׂרֵי פְלִשְׁתִּים אָמְרוּ לֹא־יַעֲלֶה עִמָּנוּ בַּמִּלְחָמָה 'And Achish made answer to David, "I know that you are as blameless in my sight as an angel of God; nevertheless the commanders of the Philistines have said, 'He shall not go up with us to the battle' ". In a construction like this, one is inclined to suppose that אך governs the preposed clause element. This is, of course, very well possible, difficult to prove, however. Dividing אך + clause (with preposed subject) or אַךְ שָׂרֵי פְלִשְׁתִּים + verbal clause does not lead to different interpretations of the text and therefore differing translations.

In Lev. xi 36: אַךְ מַעְיָן וּבוֹר מִקְוֵה־מָיִם יִהְיֶה טָהוֹר וְנֹגֵעַ בְּנִבְלָתָם יִטְמָא 'Nevertheless a spring or a cistern holding water shall be clean; but whatever touches the carcass shall be unclean' the question whether אך governs only the, rather long, subject or the whole clause is impossible to decide[38].

In Ez. xlvi 17: וְכִי־יִתֵּן מַתָּנָה מִנַּחֲלָתוֹ לְאַחַד מֵעֲבָדָיו וְהָיְתָה לּוֹ עַד־שְׁנַת הַדְּרוֹר וְשָׁבַת לַנָּשִׂיא אַךְ נַחֲלָתוֹ בָּנָיו לָהֶם תִּהְיֶה 'But if he makes a gift out of his inheritance to one of his servants, it shall be his to the year of liberty;

[37] Lev. xi 36; Dtn. xviii 20; Jos iii 4; i Sam. xx 39; xxix 9; ii Sam ii 10; i Reg. ix 24; xxii 44; Jer v 5; xxvi 24; Ez. xlvi 17; Hos. iv 4; Zach. i 6; Ps. xxiii 6; xlix 16; lxviii 7, 22; cxxxix 11; cxl 14; Job xiv 22; xxiii 6; Ezr. x 15; ii Chr. xx 33; xxx 11.

[38] Other examples with a verbal form derived of היה in Jos. iii 4; Jer. xxvi 24.

then it shall revert to the prince; only his sons may keep a gift from his inheritance', it is not quite clear how the אך-clause is constructed. Because of the prepositional phrase לוֹ preceding the verbal form one is inclined to suppose that אך governs the clause rather than the subject.

In some cases there cannot be much doubt, as in i Sam. xx 39: וְהַנַּעַר לֹא־יָדַע מְאוּמָה אַךְ יְהוֹנָתָן וְדָוִד יָדְעוּ אֶת־הַדָּבָר 'But the lad knew nothing; only Jonathan and David knew the matter'. The contrast between the different subjects in the clauses leaves no doubt about the function of אך in this passage[39]. In some instances the direct relation of אך to the preposed subject may be supposed to be quite clear viz. when the preposed subject is a personal pronoun as in Jer. v 5[40]: אֵלְכָה־לִּי אֶל־הַגְּדֹלִים וַאֲדַבְּרָה אוֹתָם כִּי הֵמָּה יָדְעוּ דֶּרֶךְ יְיָ מִשְׁפַּט אֱלֹהֵיהֶם אַךְ הֵמָּה יַחְדָּו שָׁבְרוּ עֹל נִתְּקוּ מוֹסֵרוֹת 'I will go to the great, and will speak to them; for they know the way of the Lord, the law of their God." But they all alike had broken the yoke, they had burst the bonds'. It is interesting to note that אך followed by a personal pronoun only occurs a very few times, apart from the ones just mentioned only once more in a nominal clause, Ps. lxii 3, v. supra.

Sometimes the subject is extended with some apposition as e.g. in Job xiv 22: אַךְ־בְּשָׂרוֹ עָלָיו יִכְאָב וְנַפְשׁוֹ עָלָיו תֶּאֱבָל 'He feels only the pain of his own body, and he mourns only for himself'.

Zach. i 6: אַךְ דְּבָרַי וְחֻקַּי אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי אֶת־עֲבָדַי הַנְּבִיאִים הֲלוֹא הִשִּׂיגוּ אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם וַיָּשׁוּבוּ וַיֹּאמְרוּ כַּאֲשֶׁר זָמַם יְיָ צְבָאוֹת לַעֲשׂוֹת לָנוּ כִּדְרָכֵינוּ וּכְמַעַלְלֵינוּ כֵּן עָשָׂה אִתָּנוּ 'But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not overtake your fathers ? So they repented and said, As the Lord of hosts purposed to deal with us for our ways and deeds, so has he dealt with us'. In this passage the preposed subject has been extended considerably and the interrogative particle, which could have been prefixed to the preposed subject, is moved to the beginning of the actual verbal clause[41].

In Ps. cxl 14: אַךְ צַדִּיקִים יוֹדוּ לִשְׁמֶךָ יֵשְׁבוּ יְשָׁרִים אֶת־פָּנֶיךָ 'Surely the righteous shall give thanks to thy name; the upright shal dwell in thy presence', the chiastic construction leads to thesupposition that אך governs both clauses that follow it. All the information in this verse is in contrast[42]with

[39] Cf. further ii Sam. ii 10; i Reg. ix 24; xxii 44 (= ii Chr. xx 33); Ps. xxiii 6 (on this passage, cf. also Snaith, p. 222); xlix 16; lxviii 7, 22; cxxxix 11; Ezr. x 15; ii Chr. xxx 11.

[40] For another example, Job xxiii 6, v. supra.

[41] For the other construction, cf. Num. xii 2.

[42] Cf. also Snaith, p. 223.

the justice done by God in the previous verses: 'the righteous, however, ...'. Also in Hos iv 4: אַךְ אִישׁ אַל־יָרֵב וְאַל־יוֹכַח אִישׁ וְעַמְּךָ כְּמְרִיבֵי כֹהֵן 'Yet let no one contend, and let none accuse, for with you is my contention, O priest', several translators and commentators have found a chiastic construction, אִישׁ being subject twice. The verse is difficult, however, and most commentators and translators base themselves on various emended texts. Others have favoured textemendations which lead to a situation in which אִישׁ functions as an object twice[43], while also the existence of a chiastic construction here is doubted[44]. Whatever the correct explanation, we are sure that a chiastic construction is meant in this passage, and favour the idea that אך indicates a contrast with the preceding verses.

In Dt. xviii 20 the preposed subject is lengthened through the addition of several relative clauses, and is therefore repeated after the verbal form: אַךְ הַנָּבִיא אֲשֶׁר יָזִיד לְדַבֵּר דָּבָר בִּשְׁמִי אֵת אֲשֶׁר לֹא־צִוִּיתִיו לְדַבֵּר וַאֲשֶׁר יְדַבֵּר בְּשֵׁם אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים וּמֵת הַנָּבִיא הַהוּא 'but the prophet, who presumes to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die'.

3.2.2.2 Preposed object[45].

The problems with clauses in which a preposed object is preceded by אך are comparable to those with a preposed subject. We quote only a few examples.

In several instances only the preposed element is governed by אך, compare e.g.[46]: Lev. xi 4: אַךְ אֶת־זֶה לֹא תֹאכְלוּ מִמַּעֲלֵי הַגֵּרָה וּמִמַּפְרִיסֵי הַפַּרְסָה אֶת־הַגָּמָל כִּי־מַעֲלֵה גֵרָה הוּא וּפַרְסָה אֵינֶנּוּ מַפְרִיס טָמֵא הוּא לָכֶם 'Nevertheless among those that chew the cud or part the hoof, you shall not eat these: The camel, because it chews the cud but does not part the hoof is unclean to you'.

In other instances it is rather difficult to say what is really governed by

[43] Cf. e.g. Wolff, 1961, p. 88, who favours an emendation in order to save the chiastic construction.

[44] Rudolph, 1966, p. 96, takes the first אִישׁ as subject, the second one as object of its verb; for a discussion of some earlier literature, cf. Rudolph ibid.

[45] Gen. ix 4, 5; Ex. xii 16; xxxi 13; Lev. xi 4, 21; xxvii 26, 28; Num. i 49; xviii 17; xxii 20; xxxi 22; Dt. xiv 7; ii Sam. iii 13; Jer. xii 1; xvi 19; xxx 11; Ps. lxxv 9; Prov. xvii 11; Job ii 6; xiii 15, 20; xxxv 13.

[46] See below for Gen. ix 4, 5; other examples in Ex. xii 16, xxxi 13, Lev. xi 21; Num. i 49; xviii 17, xxxi 22f., Dt. xiv 7; Jer. xvi 19; Ps. lxxv 9; Job ii 6.

אך. Cf. e.g. Jer. xxx 11: כִּי־אִתְּךָ אֲנִי נְאֻם־יְיָ לְהוֹשִׁיעֶךָ כִּי אֶעֱשֶׂה כָלָה בְּכָל־הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר הֲפִצוֹתִיךָ שָּׁם אַךְ אֹתְךָ לֹא־אֶעֱשֶׂה כָלָה וְיִסַּרְתִּיךָ לַמִּשְׁפָּט וְנַקֵּה לֹא אֲנַקֶּךָּ 'For I am with you to save you, says the Lord; I will make a full end of all the nations among whom I scattered you, but of you I will not make a full end. I will chasten you in just measure, and I will by no means leave you unpunished'. In this passage אך stresses the difference in behaviour against the nations on the one hand and Israel on the other. The supposition that אך only governs אֹתְךָ is the most plausible, but taking it as the introduction of the whole clause cannot be ruled out completely.

In Lev. xxvii 26: אַךְ־בְּכוֹר אֲשֶׁר־יִבָּכֵר לַייָ בִּבְהֵמָה לֹא־יַקְדִּישׁ אִישׁ אֹתוֹ אִם־שׁוֹר אִם־שֶׂה לַייָ הוּא 'but as firstling of animals, which as a firstling belongs to the Lord, no man may dedicate; whether ox or sheep, it is the Lord's' also both a translation by means of 'but' and of 'only' is possible, and there is no difference in meaning[47].

More clearly the introduction of the whole clause is אך in Jer. xii 1: צַדִּיק אַתָּה יְיָ כִּי אָרִיב אֵלֶיךָ אַךְ מִשְׁפָּטִים אֲדַבֵּר אוֹתְךָ מַדּוּעַ דֶּרֶךְ רְשָׁעִים צָלַחָה שָׁלוּ כֹּל־בֹּגְדֵי בָגֶד 'Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I complain to thee; yet I would plead my case before thee. Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Wy do all who are treacherous thrive?'[48].

Num xxii 20: וַיָּבֹא אֱלֹהִים אֶל־בִּלְעָם לַיְלָה וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אִם־לִקְרֹא לְךָ בָּאוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים קוּם לֵךְ אִתָּם וְאַךְ אֶת־הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר־אֲדַבֵּר אֵלֶיךָ אֹתוֹ תַּעֲשֶׂה 'And God came to Balaam in the night and said to him, "If the men have come to call you, rise, go with them; but only what I bid you, that shall you do'. The preposed object, extended with a relative clause, is repeated, again in a position before the verb, by a pronoun, a construction type we have already seen with a preposed subject.

In ii Sam. iii 13 the clause is formally a nominal one, the verbal action being expressed by a participle. Again it is difficult to decide whether אך governs this preposed object or the complete clause: וַיֹּאמֶר טוֹב אָנִי אֶכְרֹת אִתְּךָ בְּרִית אַךְ דָּבָר אֶחָד אָנֹכִי שֹׁאֵל מֵאִתְּךָ לֵאמֹר לֹא־תִרְאֶה אֶת־פָּנַי כִּי אִם־לִפְנֵי הֲבִיאֲךָ אֶת מִיכַל בַּת־שָׁאוּל בְּבֹאֲךָ לִרְאוֹת אֶת־פָּנָי 'And he said, "Good; I will make a covenant with you; but one thing I require of you; that is, you shall not see my face, unless you first bring Michal, Saul's daughter, when you come to see my face".'

In Prov. xvii 11: אַךְ־מְרִי יְבַקֶּשׁ־רָע וּמַלְאָךְ אַכְזָרִי יְשֻׁלַּח־בּוֹ 'an evil man

[47] Cf. also Lev. xxvii 28; Job xiii 20; xxxv 13.
[48] Cf. also Job xiii 15.

seeks only rebellion, and a cruel messenger will be sent against him', whether מרי or רע is the subject. RSV clearly considers רע to be the subject, but HAL explicitly states for this passage: abstract > concrete: rebellious. The RSV translation seems more attractive than an explanation of this passage as: 'only the rebellious one seeks evil'. Keil & Delitzsch, discussing the point at some length, opt for the other solution, because, as they say, בקש רע is a more natural combination than בקש מרי. This seems difficult to prove, and taking into account that rhyme influenced the choice of words (אַךְ - מַלְאָךְ and מְרִי - אַכְזָרִי) the argument loses much of its force.

3.2.2.3 Preposed prepositional phrase[49].

A preposed prepositional phrase may occur both with a nominal clause and a verbal one. In many instances the prepositional phrase is the element governed by אך, cf. e.g. Gen. xxxiv 15[50]: אַךְ־בְּזֹאת נֵאוֹת לָכֶם אִם תִּהְיוּ כָמֹנוּ לְהִמּל לָכֶם כָּל־זָכָר 'only on this condition will we consent to you: that you will become as we are and every male of you be circumcised'. In Ps lxii 6: אַךְ לֵאלֹהִים דּוֹמִי נַפְשִׁי כִּי־מִמֶּנּוּ תִקְוָתִי the word דּוֹמִי forms a problem, the first part of the clause, however, is hardly understood to mean something else than 'only to God', cf. ibid. verse 2. An example of this construction with a nominal clause is found in Jes xlv 24: אַךְ בַּיְיָ לִי אָמַר צְדָקוֹת וָעֹז עָדָיו יָבוֹא וְיֵבֹשׁוּ כֹּל הַנֶּחֱרִים בּוֹ 'Only in the Lord, it shall be said of me, are righteousness and strength; to him shall come and be ashamed, all who were incensed against him'.

But also with a preposed prepositional phrase it is in many cases difficult to decide whether אך governs the prepositional phrase or the whole clause; cf. Jes. xiv 15[51]: אַךְ אֶל־שְׁאוֹל תּוּרַד אֶל־יַרְכְּתֵי־בוֹר 'but you are brought down to Sheol, to the depths of the Pit'. Following the description of the presumption of Babylon in the previous verses: '... I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will make myself like the Most High', the contrasting prophetic reality is described. It is impossible to decide whether the contrast meant is that between 'the heights of the clouds' and 'Sheol' or between 'I will ascend above the heights of the clouds' and 'you

[49] Gen. xxxiv 15, 22; Ex. xii 15; Lev. xxi 23; xxiii 27, 39; Num. xii 2; xiv 9; xviii 3; xxvi 55; xxxi 23; xxxvi 6; i Sam. xxv 21; i Reg. xi 12; ii Reg xxiv 3; Jes. xiv 15; xlv 24; Ps. xxxix 7; lxii 2, 5, 6; lxxiii 1, 18; Job xxx 24; Lam. iii 3.

[50] Cf. Gen. xxxiv 22; Lev. xxi 23; Num xii 2 (v. supra); xviii 3; xxvi 55; xxxvi 6; i Reg. xi 12; Ps. xxxix 7 (first attestation of אך; v. infra); lxxiii 18 (v. infra); Lam. iii 3.

[51] Cf. also Ex. xii 15; Lev. xxiii 39; Num. xxxi 23.

are brought down to Sheol'. The difference in meaning between the two possible explanations is minimal, of course. The same problem poses itself in Ps. lxii 5: אַךְ מִשְּׂאֵתוֹ יָעֲצוּ לְהַדִּיחַ יִרְצוּ כָזָב בְּפִיו יְבָרֵכוּ וּבְקִרְבָּם יְקַלְלוּ־סֶלָה 'they only plan to thrust him down from his eminence. They take pleasure in falsehood. They bless with their mouths, but inwardly they curse'. The possibility, however, that אך only governs the preposed prepositional phrase seems more attractive. The proposed emendations do not influence the construction of אך preceding a preposed clause element, may, however, change this element to the object of the verb.

In some instances it is quite clear that אך governs the whole clause, cf. e.g. Num xiv 9: אַךְ בַּיְיָ אַל־תִּמְרֹדוּ וְאַתֶּם אַל־תִּירְאוּ אֶת־עַם הָאָרֶץ כִּי לַחְמֵנוּ הֵם סָר צִלָּם מֵעֲלֵיהֶם וַיְיָ אִתָּנוּ אַל־תִּירָאֵם 'Only, do not rebel against the Lord; and do not fear the people of the land, for they are bread for us; their protection is removed from them, and the Lord is with us; do not fear them'.

Compare further Ps. xxxvii 8: הֶרֶף מֵאַף וַעֲזֹב חֵמָה אַל־תִּתְחַר אַךְ־לְהָרַע 'refrain from anger, and forsake wrath ! fret not yourself; it tends only to evil', where אַךְ־לְהָרַע is interpreted by several as an elliptical clause on its own[52]. It seems easier to explain these words as a restriction to the preceding verb (or verbs): only to act wickedly, although in translation the words may be represented by a sentence on its own.

Syntactically difficult is Job xxx 24: אַךְ לֹא־בְעִי יִשְׁלַח־יָד אִם־בְּפִידוֹ לָהֶן שׁוּעַ 'Yet does not one in a heap of ruins stretch out his hand; and in his disaster cry for help?'.

3.2.2.4 Preposed adverb[53].

The difference between this category and the preceding one is small and the same possibilities may be expected. In Jes xxxiv 14: וּפָגְשׁוּ צִיִּים אֶת־אִיִּים וְשָׂעִיר עַל־רֵעֵהוּ יִקְרָא אַךְ־שָׁם הִרְגִּיעָה לִילִית וּמָצְאָה לָהּ מָנוֹחַ 'And wild beasts shall meet with hyenas, the satyr shall cry to his fellow; yes, there shall the night hag alight, and find for herself a resting place', it is probably only the adverb שם that is governed by אך[54]: ... only there shall Lilith do whatever she is supposed to do. Snaith[55] finds here a contrast with the

[52] Cf. Keil & Delitzsch a.l.: אַךְ־לְהָרַע ist ein Satz für sich.

[53] Jes. xxxiv 14, 15; Ps. xxxix 7; lxxiii 13; Job xvi 7.

[54] Cf. also Ps. lxxiii 13 (for this passage, cf. also Snaith, p. 224); for Ps. xxxix 7, v. infra.

[55] Snaith, p. 223.

preceding remarks: but even ... More or less the same construction is to be found in verse 15: שָׁמָּה קִנְּנָה קִפּוֹז וַתְּמַלֵּט וּבָקְעָה וְדָגְרָה בְצִלָּהּ אַךְ־שָׁם נִקְבְּצוּ דַיּוֹת אִשָּׁה רֵעוּתָהּ 'There shall the owl nest and lay and hatch and gather her young in her shadow; yea, there shall the kites be gathered, each one with her mate'. Translate rather: ... only there. In both cases the contrast with other areas, where people might easily accommodate themselves, is stressed. Again Snaith[56] supposes a contrast with the first half of the verse: ... but most unexpectedly a whole crowd of kites ..., which seems less acceptable.

In Job xvi 7: אַךְ־עַתָּה הֶלְאָנִי הֵשִׁמּוֹתָ כָּל־עֲדָתִי 'Surely now God has worn me out; thou hast made desolate all my company', אך possibly governs only the following adverb, and it indicates the contrast with the possible better situation for Job, that, however, does not follow from the vain words of his friends: restricted to this moment has he weakened me. Or rather, it governs the following clause: In contrast to what could have been he has weakened me now. Snaith reaching a comparable solution finds the contrast between Job's actual situation and the one of his friends[57].

3.2.2.5 Preposed absolute infinitive in a paronomastic construction[58].

In Gen. xxvii 30: וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר כִּלָּה יִצְחָק לְבָרֵךְ אֶת־יַעֲקֹב וַיְהִי אַךְ יָצֹא יָצָא יַעֲקֹב מֵאֵת פְּנֵי יִצְחָק אָבִיו וְעֵשָׂו אָחִיו בָּא מִצֵּידוֹ 'as soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, when Jacob had scarcely gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, Esau his brother came in from hunting'; two clauses dependent on an introducing ויהי follow each other. The first one is of the normal type indicating close proximity in time in a dependent clause. The second ויהי is also best explained as the introduction of a dependent clause[59], which means that the main clause only begins in the next verse. Within the two clauses dependent of ויהי the words וְעֵשָׂו אָחִיו בָּא מִצֵּידוֹ form a contrast with the first depenent clause. The contrast is strengthened by the word order in the second clause (preposed subject) and the introductory אך in the first one. This leads us to the conclusion that most probably אך governs the clause אַךְ יָצֹא יָצָא יַעֲקֹב מֵאֵת פְּנֵי יִצְחָק, rather than only the absolute infinitive יצא.

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[56] Snaith ibid.

[57] Snaith, p. 224.

[58] Gen. xxvii 30; xliv 28; Num. xviii 15; Jud. vii 19; xx 39; Jer. xxvi 15.

[59] Ruth i 1 begins with two dependent clauses both introduced by ויהי before the main clause starts with וילך איש.

In Gen. xliv 28 the clause following אך consists only of the absolute infinitive followed by a finite verbal form, therefore the question what is governed by אך is superfluous: וַיֵּצֵא הָאֶחָד מֵאִתִּי וָאֹמַר אַךְ טָרֹף טֹרַף וְלֹא רְאִיתִיו עַד־הֵנָּה 'one left me, and I said, Surely he has been torn to pieces, and I have never seen him since'. We should rather translate: ... He surely can only be torn to pieces ...[60].

In Num xviii 15 אך indicates a contrast between clauses and its range is the whole of the two following clauses: כָּל־פֶּטֶר רֶחֶם לְכָל־בָּשָׂר אֲשֶׁר־יַקְרִיבוּ לַיְיָ בָּאָדָם וּבַבְּהֵמָה יִהְיֶה־לָּךְ אַךְ פָּדֹה תִפְדֶּה אֵת בְּכוֹר הָאָדָם וְאֵת בְּכוֹר־הַבְּהֵמָה הַטְּמֵאָה תִּפְדֶּה 'Everything that opens the womb of all flesh, whether man or beast, which they offer to the Lord, shall be yours; nevertheless the firstborn of man you shall redeem, and the firstling of unclean beasts you shall redeem'.

Jud. vii 19: וַיָּבֹא גִדְעוֹן וּמְאַה־אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־אִתּוֹ בְּקְצֵה הַמַּחֲנֶה רֹאשׁ הָאַשְׁמֹרֶת הַתִּיכוֹנָה אַךְ הָקֵם הֵקִימוּ אֶת־הַשֹּׁמְרִים וַיִּתְקְעוּ בַּשּׁוֹפָרוֹת וְנָפוֹץ הַכַּדִּים אֲשֶׁר בְּיָדָם 'So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outskirts of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, when they had just set the watch; and they blew the trumpets and smashed the jars that were in their hands'. Also in this case is it most probable that אך governs the complete clause[61]: .. at the beginning of the middle watch, when they only had set watch ...

Jud. xx 39: וַיַּהֲפֹךְ אִישׁ־יִשְׂרָאֵל בַּמִּלְחָמָה וּבִנְיָמִן הֵחֵל לְהַכּוֹת חֲלָלִים בְּאִישׁ־יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּשְׁלֹשִׁים אִישׁ כִּי אָמְרוּ אַךְ נִגּוֹף נִגָּף הוּא לְפָנֵינוּ כַּמִּלְחָמָה הָרִאשֹׁנָה 'the men of Israel should turn in battle. Now Benjamin had begun to smite and kill about thirty men of Israel; they said, "Surely they are smitten down before us, as in the first battle" '. In this case אך seems only to govern the paronomastic construction. However, note that in the RSV translation 'surely' is meant as the translation of אך whereas it can only be the translation of the paronomastic used infinitive absolute. אך in a subtle way, indicates the contrast with reality, as the Benjaminites are really losing the battle[62].

[60] The asseverative meaning of אך here is also accepted by Muraoka, p. 129; cf. also Williams, p. 67: 'surely', to which he, however, adds: 'i.e. nothing else than'.

[61] The same holds true for Jer. xxvi 15.

[62] This also against Waltke & O'Connor, p. 586, who translate: Surely he is fleeing before us.

3.2.2.6 Preposed clause[63].

In a few instances the element following אך is in itself a clause. We found the following examples.

Gen xxiii 13: וַיְדַבֵּר אֶל־עֶפְרוֹן בְּאָזְנֵי עַם־הָאָרֶץ לֵאמֹר אַךְ אִם־אַתָּה לוּ שְׁמָעֵנִי נָתַתִּי כֶּסֶף הַשָּׂדֶה קַח מִמֶּנִּי וְאֶקְבְּרָה אֶת־מֵתִי שָׁמָּה 'and he said to Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, "But if you will, hear me; I will give the price of the field; accept it from me, that I may bury my dead there".' As the contrast stressed by אך is the whole of the preceding story, it is clear that אך governs the complete clause following, not only the dependent אם-clause.

Ex. xxi 21: אַךְ אִם־יוֹם אוֹ יוֹמַיִם יַעֲמֹד לֹא יֻקַּם כִּי כַסְפּוֹ הוּא 'But if the slave survives a day or two, he is not to be punished; for the slave is his money'. The contrast is with the preceding verse, where the punishment is announced of someone killing his slave. The contrast is between the two complete sentences, and אך in this case does not introduce the אם-clause, but the complete construction that follows.

Dt. xii 22: אַךְ כַּאֲשֶׁר יֵאָכֵל אֶת־הַצְּבִי וְאֶת־הָאַיָּל כֵּן תֹּאכְלֶנּוּ הַטָּמֵא וְהַטָּהוֹר יַחְדָּו יֹאכְלֶנּוּ 'just as the gazelle or the hart is eaten, so you may eat of it; the unclean and the clean alike may eat of it'. The clause governed by אך describes a restriction in the way meat is eaten: only as gazelle and hart are eaten, so ...; i.e. it should not be made into an offering[64].

Jos. xxii 19: וְאַךְ אִם־טְמֵאָה אֶרֶץ אֲחֻזַּתְכֶם עִבְרוּ לָכֶם אֶל־אֶרֶץ אֲחֻזַּת יְיָ אֲשֶׁר שָׁכַן־שָׁם מִשְׁכַּן יְיָ וְהֵאָחֲזוּ בְּתוֹכֵנוּ וּבַיְיָ אַל־תִּמְרֹדוּ וְאוֹתָנוּ אֶל־תִּמְרֹדוּ בִּבְנֹתְכֶם לָכֶם מִזְבֵּחַ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִבַּלְעֲדֵי מִזְבַּח יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ 'but now, if your land is unclean, pass over into the Lord's land where the Lord's tabernacle stands, and take for yourselves a possession among us; only do not rebel against the Lord, or make us as rebels by building yourselves an altar other than the altar of the Lord our God'. אך indicates the contrast between the foregoing rebellion against the Lord through the building of an unacceptable extra altar and the possibility offered to the Reubenites and their allies to take part in the religious activities around the one altar at the tabernacle.

i Sam. viii 9: וְעַתָּה שְׁמַע בְּקוֹלָם אַךְ כִּי־הָעֵד תָּעִיד בָּהֶם וְהִגַּדְתָּ לָהֶם מִשְׁפַּט הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר יִמְלֹךְ עֲלֵיהֶם 'now then, hearken to their voice; only, you shall solemnly warn them, and show them the ways of the king who shall reign

[63] Gen. xxiii 13; Ex. xxi 21; Dt. xii 22; Jos. xxii 19; i Sam. viii 9.
[64] So Keil & Delitzsch a.l.

over them'. The use of כי, which may function as a particle that nominalizes a following clause, makes it probable that אך governs this clause, which includes the rest of the verse. The contrast is, of course with verse 7: 'hearken to the voice of the people in all that they say to you'. With the repetition of שמע בקול a condition is given that has to be fulfilled before Samuel may give in to the people.

3.2.2.7 Preposed predicate in a nominal clause[65].

In many instances it is difficult to determine whether the order in a nominal clause is normal or reversed. In Jes lxiii 8: וַיֹּאמֶר אַךְ־עַמִּי הֵמָּה בָּנִים לֹא יְשַׁקֵּרוּ וַיְהִי לָהֶם לְמוֹשִׁיעַ 'for he said, Surely they are my people, sons who will not deal falsely; and he became their Saviour', however, it is probable that the normal order would be עַמִּי הֵמָּה[66], so אך governs the preposed predicate of the nominal clause עַמִּי הֵמָּה my people they are, restricting the possibilities of the people to belong to someone else: only my people they are (will be); my exclusive property are these people.

A comparable construction is to be found in Jer. v 4: וַאֲנִי אָמַרְתִּי אַךְ־דַּלִּים הֵם נוֹאֲלוּ כִּי לֹא יָדְעוּ דֶּרֶךְ יְיָ מִשְׁפַּט אֱלֹהֵיהֶם 'Then I said, "These are only the poor, they have no sense; for they do not know the way of the Lord, the Law of their God".'

3.2.2.8 Preposed predicate in a verbal clause.

In Hos. xii 12 the predicate of a היה-clause precedes the verbal form: אִם־גִּלְעָד אָוֶן אַךְ־שָׁוְא הָיוּ בַּגִּלְגָּל שְׁוָרִים זִבְּחוּ גַּם מִזְבְּחוֹתָם כְּגַלִּים עַל תַּלְמֵי שָׂדָי 'If there is iniquity in Gilead they shall surely come to naught; if in Gilgal they sacrifice bulls, their altars also shall be like stone heaps on the furrow of the field'. This difficult text has been explained and emended in different ways by several commentators, but the meaning of אַךְ־שָׁוְא הָיוּ 'nothing but naught they are' is accepted by most.

4 Meaning.

In most of the cases mentioned until now אך has a restrictive or contrastive function, a point stressed by Snaith more than thirty years ago: 'אך

[65] Gen. xxix 14; i Reg. xxii 32; Jes. lxiii 8; Jer. v 4.
[66] Cf. e.g. Waltke & O'Connor, p. 130f.

always involves restriction, an element of 'on the contrary', and sometimes even is adversative'[67], not in this form accepted by Waltke & O'Connor, who find two functions for אך: a demonstrative and a restrictive adverb[68]. Also Muraoka stresses the asseverative-emphatic use of אך 'in a fair number of places scattered throughout the Hebrew Bible'[69]. Especially when אך governs a clause rather than a word or word group this contrastive meaning is an important feature. This restrictive function is also stressed by early jewish exegesis, cf. e.g.[70]: נחמיה עימסוני שימש את רבי עקיבא עשרים ושתים שנה ולמדו אתים וגמים ריבויין אכין ורקין מיעוטין 'Nehemia ᶜImsoni served with Rabbi Aqiva for twenty-two years and learned from him: the *ʾet*'s and the *gam*'s are additive, the *ʾak*'s and *raq*'s are limitative in function'. In later Hebrew אך only has this limitative or contrastive meaning.

As this meaning is well documented and well accepted it is of not much use to discuss it further. Therefore we will, at the end of this overview, discuss a number of attestations of אך that are frequently adduced to prove its supposed meaning 'surely', and that have not yet been treated above. This meaning is mentioned as the first one by many well-known dictionaries, like BDB, HAH[17,18], HAL, DCH[71].

Gen. xxvi 9: וַיִּקְרָא אֲבִימֶלֶךְ לְיִצְחָק וַיֹּאמֶר אַךְ הִנֵּה אִשְׁתְּךָ הִוא וְאֵיךְ אָמַרְתָּ אֲחֹתִי הִוא וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו יִצְחָק כִּי אָמַרְתִּי פֶּן־אָמוּת עָלֶיהָ 'so Abimelech called Isaac, and said, "Behold, she is your wife; how then could you say, 'She is my sister' ?" Isaac said to him, "Because I thought, 'Lest I die because of her'."', in which translation an equivalent for אך is left out. DCH translates: 'surely she is your wife', but the asseverative meaning is rather to be found in הִנֵּה than in אך. The use of אך is occasioned by the contrast with the following words, expressing a thought that has been proved wrong: וְאֵיךְ אָמַרְתָּ אֲחֹתִי הִוא. Apart from this the sound play אך - איך may have influenced the choice of אך. We are inclined to understand: 'On the contrary, behold, she is your wife, and how could you ..[72].

Gen. xxix 14: וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ לָבָן אַךְ עַצְמִי וּבְשָׂרִי אָתָּה וַיֵּשֶׁב עִמּוֹ חֹדֶשׁ יָמִים 'and Laban said to him, "Surely you are my bone and flesh !" And he stayed with him a month'. Jacob tells Laban his story and Laban answers: 'you are only

[67] Snaith, p. 222.

[68] Waltke & O'Connor, p. 670f., cf. e.g. note 93 and example 11.

[69] Muraoka, p. 130; with his remarks on the restrictive use of אך we mostly agree.

[70] Jer. Ber. 67b (and elsewhere).

[71] Cf. e.g. also Joüon, p. 502.

[72] Cf. also Snaith, p. 222; note that at same point in the parallel story, Gen. xx 12, the emotional אך is also used, but with a different clause.

my flesh and blood'. This may convey the same meaning as the translation with 'surely', but is it possible that the author also wanted to convey the meaning that Laban wants to be sure that Jacob stays with him and does not travel on to find some other relation. Only expressing certainty about their relationship seems less useful, Jacob, as well as the reader, knows about that. Snaith also stresses the improbability of translating 'surely' at this point. He explains the function of אך as indicating: contrary to all expectation to meet a relation who is hundreds of miles from home[73]. Muraoka[74] presents this passage as his first example to prove the existence of the asseverative meaning of אך, translating 'you are truly my bone and flesh'[75]. In a note he points to Ehrlich, who remarked about this verse: 'אך leitet an dieser Stelle ein erzwungenes Zugeständnis ein, das nicht ganz ohne Zweifel gemacht wird'. Muraoka states that Ehrlich rightly gives a more precise definition of the force of the particle. We might concur with him on the last point, but feel that Ehrlich with his remark correctly indicates that it is not the supposed asseverative meaning of אך that is used here, but that אך expresses a contrast of some sort.

Lev. xxiii 27: אַךְ בֶּעָשׂוֹר לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי הַזֶּה יוֹם הַכִּפֻּרִים הוּא מִקְרָא־קֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לָכֶם וְעִנִּיתֶם אֶת־נַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם אִשֶּׁה לַיְיָ 'On the tenth of this seventh mont is the day of atonement; it shall be for you a time of holy convocation, and you shall afflict yourselves and present an offering by fire to the Lord'. In contrast to this translation, which again offers no trace of אך and DCH, who mentions this passage as one of the examples of the meaning 'surely', it seems much more probable that אך stresses the difference between the ruling for the first of the month Nisan and this one for the day of atonement: 'However, on the tenth ....'[76].

i Sam. xvi 6: וַיְהִי בְּבוֹאָם וַיַּרְא אֶת־אֱלִיאָב וַיֹּאמֶר אַךְ נֶגֶד יְיָ מְשִׁיחוֹ 'when they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before him".' At first sight this seems the correct translation, but then, why not use a more positive expression, a word like הנה for instance. Further, Samuel knows that one of the sons of Jesse must be anointed by him, and that somehow the Lord will indicate which one it will be. In the story the Lord and Samuel are on speaking terms and one would expect Samuel to wait for the Lord to speak. Instead of certainty אך probably indicates that

[73] Snaith, p. 224.

[74] Muraoka, p. 129 (with note 62).

[75] So, against the RSV translation, he connects אך only with the following predicate of the nominal clause.

[76] As e.g. in the translation of the NBG: 'Maar ..'.

Samuel thought, looking at the sons of Jesse: apart from the others this one is before the Lord his anointed one. אך indicates the contrast felt by Samuel between Eliab and his brothers. The difference with the axplanation 'surely' is small, but it is there nonetheless[77].

i Reg. xxii 32: וַיְהִי כִּרְאוֹת שָׂרֵי הָרֶכֶב אֶת־יְהוֹשָׁפָט וַיֹּאמְרוּ אַךְ מֶלֶךְ־יִשְׂרָאֵל הוּא וַיָּסֵרוּ עָלָיו לְהִלָּחֵם וַיִּזְעַק יְהוֹשָׁפָט 'and when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, they said, "It is surely the king of Israel". So they turned to fight against him; and Jehoshaphat cried out'. As in the preceding passage, also in this case אך stresses the difference between one person and the rest, the meaning being: in contrast to all those others, this is the one we are looking for.

ii Reg. xxiv 3: אַךְ עַל־פִּי יְיָ הָיְתָה בִּיהוּדָה לְהָסִיר מֵעַל פָּנָיו בְּחַטֹּאת מְנַשֶּׁה כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה 'surely this came upon Judah at the command of the Lord, to remove them out of his sight, for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he had done'. It is more poignant to take אך as the introduction of the preposed prepositional phrase only and to translate: 'only at the command of the Lord this came upon Judah ...'. In the preceding verses is related how the Lord sent Chaldeans, Syrians, etc. to destroy Judah. In this passage it is stressed again that the destruction of Judah could not have happened otherwise than 'only at the command of the Lord'. In this case 'surely' conveys more or less the same idea, but the translation 'only' is nearer to the mark.

Jes. xix 11: אַךְ־אֱוִלִים שָׂרֵי צֹעַן חַכְמֵי יֹעֲצֵי פַרְעֹה עֵצָה נִבְעָרָה אֵיךְ תֹּאמְרוּ אֶל־פַּרְעֹה בֶּן־חֲכָמִים אֲנִי בֶּן־מַלְכֵי־קֶדֶם ' the princes of Zoan are utterly foolish; the wise counsellors of Pharaoh give stupid counsel. How can you say to Pharaoh, "I am a son of the wise, a son of ancient kings" ?' Note the same play with אך and איך as we saw in Gen xxvi 9. The preposed predicate gives some stress, אך meaning here 'only', the princes of Z. are nothing but foolish, correctly translated with 'utterly'. DCH adduces this passage as an example of the meaning 'surely' for אך, which seems less acceptable.

Jes. xlv 14: כֹּה אָמַר יְיָ יְגִיעַ מִצְרַיִם וְסֹחַר־כּוּשׁ וּסְבָאִים אַנְשֵׁי מִדָּה עָלַיִךְ יַעֲבֹרוּ וְלָךְ יִהְיוּ אַחֲרֶיךְ יֵלְכוּ בַּזִּקִים יַעֲבֹרוּ וְאֵלַיִךְ יִשְׁתַּחֲווּ אֵלַיִךְ יִתְפַּלָּלוּ אַךְ בָּךְ אֵל וְאֵין עוֹד אֶפֶס אֱלֹהִים 'thus says the Lord: "The wealth of Egypt and the merchandise of Ethiopia, and the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over to you and be yours, they shall follow you; they shall come over in chains and bow down to you. They will make supplication to you, saying, "God is with you only,

[77] Cf. also Waltke & O'Connor, p. 670f. who explain the meaning of אך in this case as 'highlighting an unexpected conclusion', translating 'surely'.

and there is no other, no god besides him".' The RSV translation is correct against the supposition of DCH that in this case also אך is used with the meaning 'surely'. Snaith[78] explains אך in this passage as: contrary to what we have previously believed ... This is also a possibility, but we think our interpretation is easier and therefore more probable.

In Ps. xxxix אך is attested four times, thrice in two verses and once in a partial repetition of the first attestation, xxxix 6: הִנֵּה טְפָחוֹת נָתַתָּה יָמַי וְחֶלְדִּי כְּאַיִן נֶגְדֶּךָ אַךְ כָּל־הֶבֶל כָּל־אָדָם נִצָּב סֶלָה 'Behold, thou hast made my days a few handbreaths, and my lifetime is as nothing in thy sight. Surely every man stands as a mere breath'; xxxix 7: אַךְ־בְּצֶלֶם יִתְהַלֶּךְ־אִישׁ אַךְ־הֶבֶל יֶהֱמָיוּן יִצְבֹּר וְלֹא־יֵדַע מִי־אֹסְפָם 'surely man goes about as a shadow ! Surely for naught are they in turmoil; man heaps up, and knows not who will gather'; xxxix 12: בְּתוֹכָחוֹת עַל־עָוֹן יִסַּרְתָּ אִישׁ וַתְּמֵס כָּעָשׁ חֲמוּדוֹ אַךְ הֶבֶל כָּל־אָדָם סֶלָה 'when dost thou chasten man with rebukes for sin, thou dost consume like a moth what is dear to him; surely every man is a mere breath'. When considering אך as introduction of a clause in all these instances, the translation 'surely' is perhaps appropriate, although the impact of the word is minimal in this explanation. It is probably more illuminating to consider אך as the introduction of one clause element only: .... my lifetime is as nothing in your sight, only a complete sigh is every man that stands upright; only as a shadow[79] man goes about, only for naught they are in turmoil ... Of course, there is an element of certainty expressed in these verses on the point of man's frailty etc., but אך expresses in the first place the idea that man is really nothing more than a puff of wind and a shadow[80]. The same combination as encountered here, אַךְ הֶבֶל, is also attested in Ps. lxii 10: אַךְ הֶבֶל בְּנֵי־אָדָם כָּזָב בְּנֵי אִישׁ בְּמֹאזְנַיִם לַעֲלוֹת הֵמָּה מֵהֶבֶל יָחַד, 'Men of low estate are but a breath, men of high estate are a delusion; in the balances they go up; they are together lighter than a breath'. Note that in this instance RSV uses the restrictive translation, that is, as far as we can see, also correct for Ps. xxxix.

We encounter a comparable situation in Ps. lxxiii 18: אַךְ בַּחֲלָקוֹת תָּשִׁית לָמוֹ הִפַּלְתָּם לְמַשּׁוּאוֹת 'Truly thou dost set them in slippery places; thou dost make them fall to ruin'. The fact that the prepositional phrase is moved to a place before the verb makes it much more attractive to understand 'only in slippery places you place them'. The wicked, always at ease (v. 12) do not know about it but wherever they are they are always in slippery places,

[78] Snaith, p. 223.
[79] Or 'only in shadow'.
[80] Cf. also Snaith, p. 223.

because God only puts them there and nowhere else[81].

An interesting example of the problem is furnished by Gen. ix 4-5. In Gen. ix 4: אַךְ־בָּשָׂר בְּנַפְשׁוֹ דָמוֹ לֹא תֹאכֵלוּ 'only you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood' most translations agree that אך has a restrictive function. In Gen. ix 5: וְאַךְ אֶת־דִּמְכֶם לְנַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם אֶדְרֹשׁ מִיַּד כָּל־חַיָּה אֶדְרְשֶׁנּוּ וּמִיַּד הָאָדָם מִיַּד אִישׁ אָחִיו אֶדְרֹשׁ אֶת־נֶפֶשׁ הָאָדָם 'For your lifeblood I will surely require a reckoning; of every beast I will require it and of man; of every man's brother I will require the life of man'. In this passage many translators suppose the asseverative notion of אך. It seems not improbable that for those for whom this text was originally written the repeated אך in an comparable construction (preposed object) conveyed twice the same meaning. Probably the best solution is to translate it with 'but' in both instances.

5 אך and רק.

As remarked above, the meanings of אך and רק do not differ a great deal if at all. In some cases it is clear that the difference is really very minimal when in a comparable text אך and רק are found in the same situation, cf. e.g. Gen. ix 4: אַךְ־בָּשָׂר בְּנַפְשׁוֹ דָמוֹ לֹא תֹאכֵלוּ and Dt. xii 23: רַק חֲזַק לְבִלְתִּי אֲכֹל הַדָּם כִּי הַדָּם הוּא הַנָּפֶשׁ וְלֹא־תֹאכַל הַנֶּפֶשׁ עִם־הַבָּשָׂר. Elswhere אך and רק co-occur in such a way that one does not get the impression that any difference between them is felt by the authors, cf. Jud. vi 39: וַיֹּאמֶר גִּדְעוֹן אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים אַל־יִחַר אַפְּךָ בִּי וַאֲדַבְּרָה אַךְ הַפָּעַם אֲנַסֶּה נָּא־רַק־הַפַּעַם בַּגְּזֵּה יְהִי־נָא חָרֵב אֶל־הַגִּזָּה לְבַדָּהּ וְעַל־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ יְהִי־טָל 'Then Gideon said to God, "Let not thy anger burn against me, let me speak but this once; pray, let me make trial only this once with the fleece; pray, let it be dry only on the fleece, and on all the ground let there be dew".' Both אך and רק are connected to הפעם, and nothing more than a stylistic variation may be found here. In Ex. x 17 also both words occur, but introducing different words: וְעַתָּה שָׂא נָא חַטָּאתִי אַךְ הַפַּעַם וְהַעְתִּירוּ לַיְיָ אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וְיָסֵר מֵעָלַי רַק אֶת־הַמָּוֶת הַזֶּה 'now therefore, forgive my sin, I pray you, only this once, and entreat the Lord your God only to remove this death from me'. Note that both introduce a word (or word group) and both are not clause-initial. In Num. xii 2 both are grouped together to form one expression: וַיֹּאמְרוּ הֲרַק אַךְ־בְּמֹשֶׁה דִּבֶּר יְיָ הֲלֹא גַם־בָּנוּ דִבֵּר וַיִּשְׁמַע יְיָ 'and they said, "Has the Lord indeed only spoken through Moses ? Has he not spoken through us also ?" And the Lord heard it'.

[81] Cf. also Snaith, p. 223.

The description of the meaning of רק as given by B. Jongeling[82] does also not leave much doubt on this point. The difference between the two that remains is to be found in their distribution. אך is particularly frequent in poetry and prophetic texts (among others), whereas רק 'ne se rencontre guère dans les livres prophétiques et poétiques'[83].

6 Conclusion.

אך is a word that within narrative prose is mainly used in direct speech[84]. Further it is more frequent in prophetic and poetic literature. One gets the impression that its frequency is greater in earlier texts than in later ones.

Its meaning is mainly restrictive or limitative with regard to something just mentioned or a well known fact.

When אך governs a clause it is best explained as 'but', 'however' and when it governs merely a word or word group as 'only'.

The meaning 'surely', in several dictionaries mentioned as the first of the possible translations, in most instances where it is proposed rather obscures the meaning of the passage, although there are a few texts in which it might be acceptable as a translation.

[82] B. Jongeling, p. 107.
[83] Jongeling ibid.
[84] Cf. BDB: 'colloquial'.

Abbreviations

Barth	J. Barth, *Die Pronominalbildung in den Semitischen Sprachen*, Leipzig, 1913.
BDB	Francis Brown, S.R. Driver & Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament .. based on the Lexicon of William Gesenius as translated by Edward Robinson*, Oxford, 1957 [1907].
Böttcher i,	Fr. Böttcher, *Ausführliches Lehrbuch der Hebräischen Sprache i*, Leipzig, 1866.
Brockelmann	C. Brockelmann, *Grundriss der vergleichenden Grammatik der semitischen Sprachen ii*, Berlin, 1913 [reprint Hildesheim, 1966].
Castellino	G. R. Castellino, *The Akkadian Personal Pronouns and Verbal System in the Light of Semitic and Hamitic*, Leiden, 1962.
Cowley	A.E. Cowley, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, Oxford, 1910.
DCH	David J.A. Clines, *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, vol. i, Sheffield, 1993.
Diakonoff	I.M. Diakonoff, *Semito-Hamitic Languages*, Moscow 1965.
Eitan	Israel Eitan, Hebrew and Semitic Particles, *AJSL xliv*, 1927-1928, pp. 177-205, 254-259, xlv, 1928-1929, pp. 48-63, 130-145, 197-211, xlvi, 1929-1930, pp. 22-51.
Festschrift Hospers	*Scripta signa vocis: studies about scripts, scriptures, scribes and languages in the Near East, presented to J.H. Hospers by his pupils, colleagues and friends*, ed. by H.L.J. Vanstiphout et al., Groningen, 1986.
GAG	W. von Soden, Grundriss der Akkadischen Grammatik, Roma, 1952.
HAH[17]	Wilhelm Gesenius, *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament ... bearbeitet von Frants Buhl*, Leipzig, 1921 [1917].
HAH[18]	Wilhelm Gesenius, *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament ... her. Rudolf Meyer & Herbert Donner*, Berlin etc., 1987.
HAL	L. Koehler & W. Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament i*, Leiden, 1994.
Holladay	W.L. Holladay, *Jeremiah*, Philadelphia, 1986.

Jongeling	B. Jongeling, La particule רק, *OTS xviii*, Leiden, 1973, pp. 97-107.
Keil & Delitzsch	*Biblischer Commentar über das Alte Testament*, herausgegeben von Carl Friedr. Keil und Franz Delitzsch, Leipzig, 1864– .
König 1895	Fr. E. König, *Historisch-Kritisches Lehrgebäude der Hebräischen Sprache*, Leipzig, 1895.
König 1897	Fr. E. König, *Historisch Comparative Syntax der Hebräischen Sprache*, Leipzig, 1897.
Meyer	R. Meyer, *Hebräische Grammatik ii*, Berlin, 1969.
Muraoka	T. Muraoka, *Emphatic Words and Structures in Biblical Hebrew*, Jerusalem – Leiden, 1985.
Plöger	O. Plöger, *Sprüche Salomos*, Biblischer Kommentar, Altes Testament, Neukirchen–Vluyn, 1984.
Reckendorf	H. Reckendorf, *Die syntaktischen Verhältnisse des Arabischen*, Leiden, 1998.
Rudolph	W. Rudolph, *Hosea*, Kommentar zum Alten Testament, Gütersloh, 1966.
Snaith	N. H. Snaith, The meaning of the Hebrew אַךְ, *Vetus Testamentum xiv*, 1964, p. 122-225.
Waltke & O'Connor	Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, Winona Lake, 1990.
Williams	R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax, an Outline*, Toronto, 1967.
Wolff	H. W. Wolff, *Dodekapropheton 1, Hosea*, Biblischer Kommentar, Altes Testament, Neukirchen–Vluyn, 1961.
Wright^3 i	W. Wright, A Grammar of the Arabic Language, third edition revised by W. Robertson Smith and M. J. de Goeje, vol. i, Cambridge, 1896 [reprint 1967].