Re-discovering the Semantics of אמן in *Qal**

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ABSTRACT: This study presents a philological and semantic essay of the verb אָמַן in order to uncover the semantic Wortfeld of its *qal* conjugation. The most of philological and exegetic studies omit the analysis of this conjugation because they consider it insignificant and without any semantic value. Thus, they focus their studies on the *nifal* and *hifil* forms as the basic semantic platform that permeates all the grammatical forms of the *shoresh* אמן. This essay proposes a different opinion. The *qal* form is the primeval semantic substratum that permeates all the grammatical forms of the lexeme אמן, becoming the semantic platform upon which the meanings of the *nifal* and *hifil* conjugations are built.

KEY WORDS: *ʾāman, qal,* Protection, Parents, Cognitive Semantics.

Redescubrir el valor semántico de אמן *in qal*

RESUMEN: El estudio presenta un ensayo filológico y semántico del verbo אָמַן con el fin de resaltar el valor semántico de su *Wortfeld* en la conjugación *qal.* La mayoría de los estudios filológicos y exegéticos ha omitido el análisis de este lexema en *qal* al haberlo considerado marginal, ya que sus investigaciones enfatizan las formas *nifal* e *hifil* del lexema como la plataforma semántica básica que impregna todas las formas gramaticales del *shoresh* אמן. En este ensayo se propone una opinión diversa. La conjugación *qal* presentaría el sustrato semántico primitivo que impregna todas las formas gramaticales del lexema אמן, que se convierte en la plataforma semántica sobre la cual se construyen los significados de las formas *nifal* y *hifil* de la raíz en estudio.

Palabras clave: *ʾāman, qal,* protección, padres, semántica cognitiva.

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Introduction

The Sacred Scripture articulates in a theological manner diverse phenomenological manifestations of conviction and security encountered through an experiential relationship with God.[1] It is necessary, therefore, to elucidate and clarify the basic meaning of the Old Testament vocabulary that has been used by the original authors in order to express their personal relationship with YHWH in concrete historical contexts. These "facts of language are interpreted from the perspective of a usage-based model, according to which language is built from actual usage events".[2]

Such historical contexts with its respective linguistics usage imply, other than the moment of the revelation itself, a way of expression of the revealed truth through the faith of Israel as it evolved from the moment of its concrete experience until it had been conveyed within fixed theological and linguistic notions.

Following this methodological reasoning, the semantic analysis of the vocabulary of faith employed by the hagiographers must be the essential platform on which to discover its theological value. The semantic examination uncovers the original semantic nucleus of the verb אָמַן in its proper context while determining its most original message according to the real intention of the author manifested in the *qal* forms. It is important to clarify that a lexeme manifested in different binyamin, as it is the case of *nifal* and *hifil,* can adopt different semantic levels that are not necessarily related or derived from the *qal.* However, in the case of the root אמן there has been a philological debate in order to elucidate its original meaning.

Alfred Jepsen encounters this issue exposing the possible archaic meanings of the root, using comparative analysis with different languages such as Arabic, Aramaic, and Syriac.[3] He indicates that the lexeme has a strong connection with the Arabic *'amina* that can conjointly signify "secure" and "faithful". The same term implied the equivalent in the meaning of *qal* and *nifal,* not excluding each other, since one meaning includes the other.[4] Therefore, Jepsen in his philological analysis supports

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[1] Vatican Council II, "Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum,* on Divine Revelation" 12; Janda, "Cognitive Linguistics in the year 2015", 135.

[2] Janda, "Cognitive Linguistics in the year 2015", 131.

[3] Jepsen affirms that "when we do not know the original meaning, the development of a word can lead us far from that meaning to something entirely different" (Jepsen, "אָמַן", 293).

[4] Ibid., 292-293. Koehler and Baumgartner do not see this semantic correlation implied in the same root of אמן. They suggest two different lexemes. The first lexeme (I אמן) presents the basic meanings "to be firm, trustworthy, and safe". This root does not imply the same meanings in *qal,* manifesting the diverse semantic variations expressed in *nifal* and *hifil.* The second lexeme (II אמן) predominately expresses the meanings of *qal,* namely, protection, care, security, nurse, protector, etc. The philological position

the semantic value of *qal* as one of the essential manifestations in the meaning of the root in order to clarify its fundamental meanings.[5]

Therefore, the current essay presents a semantic analysis of the verb of אָמַן under the approach of Sachexegese[6], in order to highlight its theological meanings and interpretation that express an essential aspect of the semantic analysis. Using this methodological approach emphasizes the effort to interpret the verb אָמַן in light of the central concern of the biblical texts, which are theological in nature.[7] Consequently, the present semantic methodology offers a synchronic and diachronic Semasiology of the aforementioned verb that goes beyond the simplistic lexicographic analysis of the studied term.[8]

As one of the branches of semantics, Semasiology studies a specific word or lexeme starting from its form, then analyzes and decodes the diverse meanings associated with it throughout the different texts and historical contexts in which a term may appear. Semasiology also studies the semantic changes of a term, as it is in the particular case of the shoresh אמן in order to determine its semantic changes. If we cannot first establish which is its most fundamental meaning, then it would be difficult to use it as a point of reference to determine alternative added meanings applied throughout specific historical contexts.

While this essay does not pretend to offer a solution to this philological problem, its purpose is to reconsider the semantic value of *qal* as a substratum or source domain for the interpretation of the different binyanim. The synchronic approach presented in this essay does not exclude the diachronic dimension of the theological notions of the Old Testament. Such notions can imply a transformation of meaning that goes

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of Brown, Driver, Briggs, Gesenius and Jepsen disagree with the aforementioned division of these two stems, suggesting a unique shoresh that implies a rich semantic spectrum. See Koehler, Baumgartner, and Stamm, "I אמן", I, 63-64; Gesenius, "אָמַן", 58-59; Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament:* "אָמַן", 52-53.

[5] Jepsen, "אָמַן", 293-294. The same methodological path is followed by Juan Alfaro, who acknowledges the predominance of אמן in *nifal* and *hifil* as expressions of faith, but he began his analysis positing the basic meanings of אמן in *qal,* and affirming its fundamental meanings are nurture, protection, and caring. Alfaro establishes the fundamental semantic value of *qal* in order to elucidate the meanings of the other binyanim and cognate nouns of the studied root in order to have a semantic map of the shoresh. See Alfaro, "Fides in terminologia biblica", 463-464.

[6] "Sachexegese designates the effort to interpret the words of the Bible in light of the Bible's own central concern, i. e., God. The term is approximately equivalent to theological exegesis of theological interpretation." (Soulen and Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism*, 165)

[7] Ibid., 165-166.

[8] Andrason and Van der Merwe, "The Semantic Potential of Verbal Conjugations as set of Polysemous Senses", 74.

from a concrete and objective meaning of "protection, care, and security" to a more abstract and theological meaning that implies "faith, trust, or faithfulness".[9] However, using the semantic analysis of significant pericopes, it is possible to identify the most important theological meanings of the primeval semantic substratum of its *qal* conjugation that permeates the different morphosyntactic variations of the root אמן.[10]

The verb אָמַן as lexis of faith

In the books of the Old Testament [11], the most important vocabulary[12] to express the notion of faith derives from the Hebrew root אמן. This philological root cannot be found attested in Akkadian, Ugaritic, and Phoenician, but it has a great variety of semantic nuances in the biblical Hebrew[13], depending upon the conjugation and literary context in which the root is employed in the biblical narrative. According to this line of argumentation, I would like to highlight the assertion of Moberly, who affirms:

[9] T. C. Vriezen interprets the lexeme אמן as presenting the basic meaning of "holding" or "bearing," which are the basic connotations expressed in the participle forms of the root in *qal*. Vriezen uses these basic meanings in order to provide the starting point from which the meanings of the other conjugations derive (Vriezen, *Geloven en Vertrouwen*, 12-13, in Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament,* II, 276, Note 2 of the same page). See the tentative of translation and interpretation of the *hifil* form of אמן using the *qal* semantic connotations in Von Rad, *Teologia dell'Antico Testamento* 1, 202-203; Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, II, 276, especially Note 2. For a diachronic analysis of the notion of faith in the Old Testament, see Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testamnent*, II, 277-290.

[10] Nöth, *Handbook of Semiotics,* 106; Soulen and Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism*, 170. Verburg talks about Semasiology as an intellectual game of hide and seek in which the Jewish and Christian exegetes make the effort to discover the true meanings embraced in the words of the Scripture (Verburg, *Language and its Functions,* 29-30).

[11] The Masoretic text used is from Karl Elliger and Wilhelm Rudolph (dir.), *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1997).

[12] The vocabulary of faith is not limited to the philological family of the Hebrew root of אמן. There are other important terms that signify the experience of faith, e.g., the verb בָּטַח "to trust" (Deut 33,12) and יָרֵא "to fear, to respect." The latter verb is used to signify moral obedience and religious obligation (Gen 22,12) (Moberly, "אמן", 427; Idem, "בָּטַח", 644-645).

[13] Wildberger, "אמן", 134. Koehler and Baumgartner propose two different roots with the same consonants in Hebrew. According to these authors, the first root (אמן) conveys the traditional Hebrew definition of "to be firm, to be secure, to be stable, etc. This root only appears in passive participle in *qal,* while the *nifal* and *hifil* conjugated forms predominate in the Hebrew texts. The second root (אמן) comes from the Akkadian word *ummānu*, and according to Koehler, Baumgartner and Albright this root is the source from which all the active participles in *qal,* used in the MT, come from (see Num 11,12; Isa 49,23; 2 Kgs 10,1.5; Esther 2,7; 2 Sam 4,4; Ruth 4,16). The aforementioned authors, at the moment of translating the second root, proposed the same semantic value of the first root. See Koehler, Baumgartner, and Stamm "אמן", I, 63-64; Albright, "A Prince of Taanach of the Fifteenth Century", 18, Note 28. The latter opinion does not convince many scholars and philologists as it is the case of Jepsen and Moberly, who proposed only one Hebrew root, rejecting the opinion of Koehler, Baumgartner and Albright. See Jepsen, "אָמַן", 294; Moberly, "אמן", 427-428.

There are five forms of the *'mn* root that are of theological significance: the two related nouns *'emet* and *'emûnâ,* the adverb, *'āmēn,* and the two forms of the verb *ne'emān* (*ni.*) and *he'emîn* (*hi.*). Other forms either have no special theological significance or have a significance that is similar to, and probably a derivative from the five forms described here.[14]

Moberly's opinion represents the predominant academic line of thought that is also attested to in the considerable work of Wildberger.[15] For the majority of biblical exegetes, as are the two aforementioned important authors, the most significant verbal forms of the root אמן are *ne'emān* (*nifal*) and *he'emîn* (*hifil*) as the fundamental forms of the root אמן in the Old Testament.

Without denying the significant biblical contributions in the elucidations of the shoresh in *nifal* and *hifil,* I was compelled to focus my attention on the semantic and theological importance of the *qal* conjugation. The majority of the exegetes consider the *qal* conjugation of אמן as having no significance under the theological and semantic dimension of faith as manifested within the narratives of the Old Testament. Thus, many biblical and theological articles do not dedicate any comments or references to the *qal* conjugation of the verb אָמַן.[16]

Following this line of thought, the reader could infer from this predominant academic line of thought the *nifal* and *hifil* conjugations of אמן are the original and basic semantic platform upon which the other semantic nuances, manifested in other conjugations of the same verb, find their respective references, e.g., *hofal, piel, pual, hithpael,* and even *qal.* Therefore, the complete silence or omission of the *qal* form of the verb indicates that its meaning could be equal to or equivalent to the meanings expressed in *nifal* and *hifil.*

Noticing this deafening silence of the analysis of the verb אָמַן in *qal* in academia, the following logical queries emerged: Is *qal* identical to *nifal* and *hifil* regarding the verb אָמַן and for this reason is omitted? Do *nifal* and *hifil* of אָמַן express the primordial meaning of the verb?

It is important to acknowledge that the semantic values of one conjugation can be found expressed in other conjugations of the same verb throughout the different semantic nuances that the Semitic authors used in order to express the deep *spectrum* of their cultural and religious experience. Using this rationale, it is academically imperative to establish with precision the primordial verbal meaning that expresses

[14] Ibid., 428.

[15] Wildberger, "אמן", 134-157.

[16] Moberly, "אמן", 427-433; Wildberger, "אמן", 134-157; Idem, "Glauben im AT", 129-159.

the basic semantic domain in order to rediscover the elementary meaning manifested in a subtle manner in the different Hebrew verbal conjugations.

In the field of Biblical Hebrew syntax, it is traditionally accepted that the simplest conjugation is *qal,* which literally means "light".[17] This conjugation conveys the simplest action implied in the verb at the most basic semantic level (Grundstamm). According to this logical path, Joüon and Muraoka affirm that "the derived or augmented conjugations have an expanded form in relation to the simple conjugation, and the action which they express has an added objective modality."[18] These same authors affirm that the *nifal* is "the reflexive conjugation of the simple action"[19], implying that the same semantic level of *qal* remains in a certain manner but under a different aspect.

The *hifil,* on the other hand, is the active conjugation of causative action.[20] The *hifil* generally has to do with the causing of an event and as a consequence, "the object participates in the event denoted by the verbal root".[21] Therefore, following the logic of Joüon and Muraoka, the semantic values expressed in the simple conjugation, *qal*, are implied in the nuances and modalities expressed in the derived or augmented conjugations; even though the other binyanim can adopt different semantic connotations, such semantic mutations do not necessarily imply that the meaning of the Grundstamm completely disappears from the other conjugations. This elucidation is therefore limited to the study of the lexeme אמן as an exploratory way to re-discover the semantic value of its *qal* connotations that can serve as a hermeneutical key to re-interpret the traditional translations manifested in *nifal* and *hifil* without denying their particular semantic notions of faith and trust.[22]

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[17] Joüon and Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew,* I, 124, No. 40a.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid, I, 149, No. 51a.

[20] Ibid, I, 160, No. 54a.

[21] Arnold and Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax,* 49.

[22] For example, the verb בָּטַח has the basic meaning of "to trust" which is maintained as the basic semantic platform throughout its different binyanim, meaning "to be secure, to be trusted (*nifal*), to make secure (*piel*), to cause to trust (*hifil*)". This means that the basic idea of its *qal* connotation indicates the idea of "to feel secure", which implies the reason of security, i. e., "to rely on something or someone". Even though this verb is part of the semantic map of faith in the Old Testament, it is never translated as "to believe or to have faith" by the LXX (Jepsen, "בָּטַח", 89; Koehler, Baumgartner, and Stamm, "בָּטָח", 64; Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament,* II, 268-90). There are other verbal examples in which the basic *qal* meaning may not explicitly appear in the other binyanim. The fact that a lexeme does not consistently present its basic *qal* meaning throughout its other conjugations, does not categorically eliminate the hermeneutical notion that the basic or primeval meaning could illumine the semantic mutations of the root in its different conjugations.

Consequently, it is possible to affirm that in the case of the root אמן, the basic notions remain as a semantic substratum under which the variety of nuances utilized by the Semitic authors describe the broad spectrum of his or her religious and cultural experiences. It is for this reason that it is essential to reconsider the significance of אָמַן in its *qal* conjugation as a manner to rediscover its primordial meaning.

The verbal form of the lexeme אמן in *qal*

The verb אָמַן in its *qal* conjugation appears only in active participle in feminine as well as in masculine.[23] Each time that the verb appears in its simple active conjugation (*qal*) it is incorporated into a paternal or maternal context. Generally, the term is employed in the Masoretic Text to describe men and women in charge of the care of babies, children, or dependent beings. The verb in its simplest form (*qal*) can also be translated as to nourish, to nurture, to feed, to sustain, to cover, to protect, to care, to keep safe and secure.

However, the Masoretic Text exclusively presents the verb אָמַן in participle *qal* conveying the meaning of "nurse, custodian, or protector" of a baby or infant as it can be seen in Num 11,12 (הָאֹמֵן, the nurse), Isa 49,23 (אֹמְנַיִךְ your guardians), Ruth 4,16 (אֹמֶנֶת, nurse), 2Sam 4,4 (אֹמַנְתּ, nurse), 2Kgs 10,1.5 (הָאֹמְנִים, protectors, guardians), and Esther 2,7 (אֹמֵן, foster father/protector).[24] This means that the verb used in masculine and feminine throughout pericopes traditionally placed before, during, and after the Babylonian exile, signifies the proper care and concern by a father, mother, guardian, or nurse who have the responsibility of protecting and shielding children precisely because they are vulnerable and weak creatures, incapable of self-sustaining. This pragmatic notion becomes the essential premise for cognitive linguistics which ascertains that "meaning is grounded in the shared human experience of bodily existence. Human bodies give us an experimental basis for understanding a wealth of concepts".[25]

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[23] Feminine participle: 2 Sam 4,4; Ruth 4,16. Masculine participle: Num 11,12; 2 Kgs 10,1.5; Esther 2,7; Isa 49,23.

[24] Brown, Driver, and Briggs, "אָמַן", 52.

[25] Janda, "Cognitive Linguistics in the Year 2015", 134. Janda uses the example of the basic experiences of babies who began to understand the notion of in and out by putting an object in and out of their mouth. In the same way the sacred authors used the basic existential experience of protection, nourishment, care, and sustenance as the embodied cognitive experience that functions as the point of reference to describe other cognitive notions, like faith, belief, trust, and faithfulness. Evans and Green, when describing the cognitive grammar constructions, especially the verbal constructions, affirm: "…if a unit is phonologically dependent it is likely to be semantically dependent as well, and if it is phonologically autonomous, it is also likely to be semantically autonomous" (Evans and Green, *Cognitive Linguistics. An Introduction,* 591). The obvious phonological relationship between the binyanim of אמן implies a semantic dependence; therefore, it is logical to assume the semantic notion of *qal* in the other conjugations of the same root.

The text of Num 11,12[26], for example, describes the supplication of Moses to YHWH, which reflects an intimate maternal relationship. The episode shows the people of Israel as a burden, like capricious children and whimsical infants, offering the rhetorical questions of "Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth?"[27] on the lips of Moses. The reader can then add another rhetorical question implicit in the argumentation of Moses: Who is the mother? Certainly, it is not Moses but YHWH himself. Even though Moses is the leader of Israel, he is not responsible for the maternal nourishment and care of the people.[28] Only YHWH is the one who has conceived (הָרָה) and gave birth (יָלַד) to the people. For this reason, Yhwh must take care of the people as a nurse or protective mother (הָאֹמֵן).[29] The *qal* participle הָאֹמֵן used is in masculine, but its semantic value that is determined by the context, is what expresses the behavioral pattern of a mother.[30]

The passage of Isa 49,23[31] (וְהָיוּ מְלָכִים אֹמְנַיִךְ וְשָׂרוֹתֵיהֶם מֵינִיקֹתַיִךְ) presents an important distinction between the plural *qal* participle אֹמְנַיִךְ and the feminine noun מֵינֶקֶת. The Deutero-Isaian oracle presents the role of the kings as the guardians-protectors while the princesses will become the wet-nurses, namely, those who breast-feed the infants. The passage of Isa 49,23 is part of the pericope of Isa 49,14-26. The theological content of the prophetic text expresses family relations through maternal vocabulary, as it can be seen in expressions like "can a woman forget her sucking child? (הֲתִשְׁכַּח אִשָּׁה עוּלָהּ) Isa 49,15 JPS[32]) or "she should not have compassion on the son of

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[26] Num 11,12 had its final textual form in the post-exile as a result of priestly writers, but the text reflects a J tradition that can be dated circa 8th century BCE (Knierim and Coats, *Numbers,* IV, 25; 142).

[27] The biblical citations are taken from the *New Jerusalem Bible* (New York, NY: Doubleday Press, 1985). Citations from other editions will be properly indicated.

[28] Seebass, *Numeri. Biblischer Kommentar Altes Testament,* 49-50; Noth, *Numbers,* 86.

[29] The maternal image used to describe the relationship of YHWH with his people is rare in the Old Testament. The following texts of the prophet Isaiah convey the maternal dimension of YHWH in the MT: Isa 49,15; 66,13. There are also metaphors that describe the motherly attitude of YHWH with Israel through the literary image of an eagle and her chicks, e.g., Ex 19,4; Deut 32,11.

[30] Noth, *Numbers*, 87. Aleksander Gomola presents conceptual integration metaphors or blend regarding the cognitive notion of God as the Father that integrates the basic notions of the participle *qal* but without making any allusion to the Hebrew texts presented in this current essay. One of the problematic points made by the author is the maleness implied in the linguistic metaphor of "father" and thus the author analyzes the blended metaphors of God as a "mother" (Gomola, "From God is a Father to God is a Friend. Conceptual Integration in Metaphors for God in Christian Discourse", 388-397).

[31] The pericope of Isa 49,14-26 belongs to the section of the Deutero-Isaiah (chapters 40-55). This section of the book can be placed during and at the end of the Babylonian Empire, namely, the latter part of the exile ca. 550 BCE and the beginning of the return to Jerusalem ca. 535 BCE (Thompson, *Isaiah 40-66,* xvii; Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah. Chapters 40-66,* 3-5).

[32] JPS: Jewish Publication Society of Holy Scriptures (1917). Electronic text Copyright © 1995-1998 by Larry Nelson (Cathedral City, CA, 92235).

her womb?" (מֵרַחֵם בֶּן־בִּטְנָהּ Isa 49,15 JPS). The relationship between a mother and her child becomes the metaphor to express the profound bond of YHWH with his people.[33]

The prophetic poem presents the figure of a mother (Sion) who is unprotected and abandoned. In her despair, she invoked YHWH (Isa 49,14) who replies as a empathic mother who cannot forget and abandon her own children (Isa 49,15). The oracle's divine answer is developed through images of care, nourishment, and restoration corresponding to that of a maternal love that radically changed the humiliating situation of the exiles. After experiencing the destruction of Jerusalem and the people of Israel are forced to leave their land, Isa 49,23 describes their drastic transformation through their exile. The peripeteia of the event is described by the adoption of the kings of the nations who become their guardians and protectors (*qal* participle אֹמְנַיִךְ), assuming the role of foster fathers of Israel in its return to Sion. The highpoint of the peripeteia is the moment when the foreign kings prostrate in front of Israel, symbolizing their humiliation and servitude.[34]

The verb אָמַן in *qal,* used in feminine or masculine participle, also signifies the notion of a leader, mentor, and educator of a child or youth who embraces the role of a father and a mother simultaneously. The reader can observe this meaningful connotation in the behavioral pattern of Mordecai. He adopted the orphan Esther as is depicted in Esther 2,7: וַיְהִי אֹמֵן אֶת־הֲדַסָּה. The narrator uses the participle אֹמֵן that can be translated as foster father/protector or "the one who brings up." The term אֹמֵן describes Mordecai, in this particular context, with the characteristics of a paternal pedagogue who also exercises the cares of a mother.[35] When Mordecai becomes the foster father of Esther, he also assumes the double responsibility of parental protection and didactic formation of the child.

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[33] The general structure of the pericope presents six parts: (1) The lament of Sion (v. 14); (2) the divine confirmation given in a form of a rhetorical question (v.15: see also Isa 40,27-28); (3) the promise of the reconstruction of the city: Jerusalem (vv.16-17); (4) the re-population of the city (vv. 18-21); (5) the return of the people from the diaspora (vv. 22-23); and (6) the proclamation of the divine protection. See Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55,* 309-310. Westermann divides the pericope in three sections: (1) vv. 14-20; (2) 21-23; and (3) 24-26. He uses the criteria of dispute and proclamation of salvation manifested in the poem (Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66. A Commentary,* 218).

[34] Wilson, *The Nations in Deutero-Isaiah. A Study on Composition and Structure,* 282-284; 286-287; Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66,* 220-221; Thompson, *Isaiah 40-66,* 83-84; Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah,* 311-312.

[35] Jepsen, "אָמַן", 294; Levenson, *Esther. A Commentary,* 58; Beal, *Esther,* 27. See also the Note 4 of the same page. Gerleman disputes the proposal of the root II of Koehler, Baumgartner, and Albright when he analyzes the participle אֹמֵן in Est 2,7. Gerleman concludes that the participle embraces all the semantic notions of the proper care and nourishment by a father and mother concurrently expressed in the Hebrew root I (Gerleman, *Esther,* 78).

For this reason Gesenius suggests that the Greek παιδαγωγός is the most appropriate term to translate אֹמֵן in this context.[36] This episode is a good example towards the end of Babylonian exile[37] where the objective semantic level of paternal and maternal care-protection acquires a nuanced meaning of education and formation.[38] The semantics of *qal* evolves in its renditions throughout the nuanced notions derived from its basic meaning or basic experiential domain.

In the passage of Esther 2,20, the narrator affirms that Esther followed Mordecai's instructions while she was under his "care" (אָמְנָה). The feminine Hebrew noun אָמְנָה describes Mordecai's nourishment and education. Generally, this term can also be translated as care, tutelage, guidance, custody, oversight, and protection. All these semantic implications are simultaneously implied in this Hebrew noun, which derives from the *qal* of the root אמן and embodies the same semantic value of the *qal* participle used in Esther 2,7 (אֹמֵן).[39]

Another example of the usage of the verb in *qal* expresses the basic care and custody that one may offer to a child: "Jehu sent to Samaria, to the authorities of the city, to the elders and to the guardians (הָאֹמְנִים) of Ahab's children" (2Kgs 10,1).[40] Jehu's intention is to exterminate the royal lineage of Ahab and accordingly he sent instructive letters to three groups of characters: the leaders and the elders who represent the authority, and the guardians (protectors-tutors: הָאֹמְנִים) who are the inner and most intimate group of the royal family. They protect and raise the future bloodline, acting as foster-parents (parental dimension) and *paidagogoi* (didactic dimension). The אֹמְנִים should guard and educate the princes with the attention and discipline implied in the future royal responsibilities of a monarch.[41]

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[36] Gesenius, "אמן", 58-59.

[37] The recent studies of Albert Friedberg and Vincent DeCaen state that the book was composed of or manifests stages of composition at some point during the end of the Babylonian exile and on towards the beginning of the Persian period. They affirm the book took its final form during the fifth century. Friedberg and DeCaen, "Dating the Composition of the Book of Esther. A Response to Larsson", 427-428. Reid argues that the book probably began to be written in the fifth century BCE, without negating the probability that its final form was established between the third and the second century BCE (Reid, *Esther. An Introduction and Commentary,* 21-22).

[38] "Significatio fundamentalis istorum terminorum videtur ese illa sustentandi, portandi, inde fit significatio translata educandi, curam habendi" (Alfaro, "Fides in terminologia biblica", 463-464).

[39] Jepsen, "אָמַן", 294; Gerleman, *Esther,* 83.

[40] The pericope of 2Kings 10,5 offers the same semantic notion: וַיִּשְׁלַח אֲשֶׁר־עַל־הַבַּיִת וַאֲשֶׁר עַל־הָעִיר וְהַזְּקֵנִים וְהָאֹמְנִים אֶל־יֵהוּא לֵאמֹר. These texts of 2Kings 10,1.5 can be placed during the time of the exile according to the opinion of Noth and Veijola (Campbell and O'Brien, *Unfolding the Deuteronomistic History*, 426).

[41] Gray, *I-II Kings. A Commentary,* 553-554.

The passage of Ruth 4,16 maintains the same semantic line.[42] The verse says: "…and Naomi, taking the child, held him to her breast; and it was she who looked after him (לְאֹמֶֽנֶת)". It is essential to clarify that in this context the feminine participle אֹמֶנֶת does not signify a *wet-nurse* or a nurse who feeds with her breast milk. Naomi's age would not allow it, and for this kind of function the author would use the more appropriate feminine participle of מֵינֶקֶת (breast-feeder) from the verb יָנַק (to breast-feed). It would be erroneous to deduce that the latter verb is a synonym of אָמַן according to the similarity of maternal contexts. Naomi assumes the responsibility of raising a child according to a maternal and pedagogical dimension.[43]

Following the semantic line of the *qal* conjugation manifested in the afore-mentioned texts, one can deduce that the primordial meaning of the verb אָמַן is "to take care and guide responsibly,"[44] or "to protect, to nurture, and to educate."[45] Therefore, the most primeval semantic level of אָמַן in *qal* is not identical with the meanings expressed in *nifal* and *hifil* because "*in forma qal non apparet significatio credendi*"[46]. Therefore, the *nifal* and *hifil* assumed and evolved theological and cognitive meanings are built from the basic meaning expressed in *qal*. Using the terminology of cognitive semantics, the embodied notions of *qal* become the point of reference to construe the ontological metaphors of faith, trust, and belief implied in the *nifal* and *hifil*.[47]

The *qal* conjugation, being the simplest in the Hebrew verbal system, has the value of being the most basic conjugation in comparison with other binyanim. This implies that *qal* expresses the most fundamental semantic value of the Hebrew root אמן. This statement is found in the philological studies and analysis of Paul Joüon and Takamitsu Muraoka. The other conjugations, like *nifal* and *hifil,* derive from the most basic verbal conjugation of *qal* by way of augmentatives forms through the additions or changes of prefixal and suffixal elements, acquiring different nuances and

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[42] Most of the academic opinions place the book of Ruth between the exile and post exile, namely between the end of the Babylonian and Persian dominions. McKeown deals with the puzzle of the dating of the book of Ruth, indicating that are not conclusive the literary evidence of the book, since it presents archaism that denote a pre-exilic period and Aramaisms that reveal a Persian period (McKeown, *Ruth,* 2-4).

[43] Sasson, *Ruth. A New Translation with a Philological Commentary and a Formalist-Folklorist Interpretation,* 172.

[44] Jepsen, "אָמַן", 294; Joüon, *Ruth. Commentaire philologique et exégétique,* 94.

[45] Mandelkern, *Veteris Testamenti Concordantiae Hebraicae atque Chaldaicae* I, 108.

[46] Alfaro, "Fides in terminologia biblica", 464.

[47] Janda, "Cognitive Linguistics in the Year 2015", 140-141; Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By,* 31; Evans and Green, *Cognitive Linguistics,* 294-295.

modalities of meaning built upon the basic semantic value expressed in *qal*.[48] On this matter, Joüon and Muraoka affirm in the following statement:

> The Hebrew verb comprises a number of conjugations: a simple conjugation, called *qal* (light) and a number of derived or augmented conjugations. The simple conjugation is well named because, in comparison with the others, its form is the simplest and the action which it expresses is equally simple [...]. The derived or augmented conjugations have an expanded form in relation to the simple conjugation, and the action which they express has an added objective modality.[49]

The nuances that are usually translated as to trust, to believe, to be faithful, certain, reliable, stability, etc., are embraced in the *nifal* and *hifil* forms together with the substantive forms of the same root, but the basic spectrum of semantic notions flourish from the primary notion expressed in *qal*. This means that one may trust and believe in somebody else because he or she protects, cares, guides, and behaves as a mother or a father. The notions of security, trust, stability, and fidelity become manifestations of the fundamental act of a parental love and care that cannot reject or abandon its children.[50]

Portraying the verbal form of אמן in *nifal* through the semantic notion of *qal*

The *nifal* conjugation of אָמַן expresses the reflexive or passive dimensions of the simplest action or verbal conjugation which is *qal*.[51] The binyan *nifal* of אָמַן predominantly appears in the Masoretic Text in participle: approximately 32 times, with five presences in the perfect tense, and eight recurrences in the imperfect.[52]

The text of Isaiah 60,4 encompasses an important significance for the present study. The verb is used in a passive or reflexive form, having the same semantic value of *qal*. This is one instance in which it is evident to perceive the same basic meaning of *qal* in the *nifal*. The verb תֵּאָמַנָה has the maternal connotations of a person who is taking care of children: "Lift up your eyes and look around: all are assembling and coming towards you, your sons coming from far away and your daughters being

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[48] Joüon and Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* I, Nn. 51, 54.

[49] Ibid., I, 124, No. 40a.

[50] See part of this academic debate regarding the basic meaning of the root אמן in Wildberger, "אמן", 136; Idem, "Glauben im AT", 129-159.

[51] Joüon and Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* I, No. 51a.

[52] Jepsen, "אָמַן", 294. In his statistic data Jepsen omits the pericopes of Hos 5,9; 12,1 and 1Cro 17,24. The reason of the omission is the corrupted and obscure state of the Hebrew texts.

carried (תֵּאָמַנָה) on the hip." This action embraces the notion of covering-embracing the baby with extreme care, i.e., being very close to the person's body. The purpose of the statement describes the care in bringing the children to his or her mother.

It is important to highlight the semantic field of parental protection in *nifal* because it is not often mentioned in the philological analysis of specialized lexicons as the ones aforementioned. The reason for this tendency is the emphasis made on the predominant semantic connotations of "to believe, to trust, or to be faithful." Thus the pericope of Isa 60,4-9, describes Zion glorified by a people who will be accepted as the Lord's worshippers[53], portraying the basic *qal* connotation manifested in *nifal* in a post-exilic literature.[54] The Trito-Isaiah (chapters 56-66) expresses a more universal and inclusive theological reflection due to the circumstances of the people of Israel who have been facing problems of faith after experiencing their exile.[55]

The paternal and maternal notions, however, remain as the basic semantic substratum which expresses the primary meaning of the verb, which is the action of covering, taking care, and protecting. This typical parental attitude toward an innocent creature resides as the basic platform of the action to believe at its primeval semantic notion. This semantic cross-domain mapping is the cognitive process of creating an ontological metaphor in which one takes a concept formed from a human parental experience (personal physical space) serving as a source domain for metaphors of faith and trust which are the abstractions or conceptualization of theological notions to develop.[56] One person has faith or may come to believe in another person because one has the experience that the other is reliable, firm, secure, and faithful. From that experience one has the certainty that the other person will protect and guide the one who is defenseless.

Keeping in mind this connotation, the reader can then apply the same semantic nuance of the studied verb to a theological field in which the people of Israel have similar experiences with God. This means that Israel believes (meaning in *nifal* and *hifil*) in God because Israel already knows through its own history that YHWH has

[53] Motyer, *Isaiah. An Introduction and Commentary,* 420-421.

[54] Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66,* 59; Niskanen, *Isaiah 56-66,* xi-xii, especially notes 8-9; Von Rad, *Teologia dell'Antico Testamento* Vol 2. *Teologia delle tradizioni profetiche d'Israele,* 326-329; Thompson, *Isaiah 40-66,* xxix-xxx; Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah,* 3-6.

[55] Von Rad, *Teologia dell'Antico Testamento* 2, 328. During this life setting, the Trito-Isaiah uses the basic objective meaning (parental care) of אָמַן that remains present in pericopes whose historical context may last during the Babylonian and Persian periods (Niskanen, *Isaiah 56-66,* xii-xiii).

[56] Janda, "Cognitive Linguistics in the Year 2015", 140-141; Lakoff, "Conceptual Metaphor. Contemporary Theory of Mataphor", 185-186; 232-233.

protected them like a mother and father (meaning in *qal*). The relationship that exists between God and Israel manifests the same dynamics of a familial relationship between parents and children at its more basic core values. For this reason it would be a mistake to omit or reject the analysis of these basic semantic connotations of *qal* manifested in the other conjugations.[57]

The term נֶאֱמָן (*nifal*) embraces a variety of meanings that generally can be translated into English using the terminology of being firm, being secure, to be trusted, and to be faithful. From these verbal forms other adjectives and substantives derive, e.g., "secure, stable, faithful, belief, security, trust, and fidelity." For this reason, Moberly identifies the semantic connotations of נֶאֱמָן(*nifal*) as synonymous to 'emet y 'emûnâ.[58] When the lexeme is applied to a very specific person in the Old Testament, the indicated personage manifests the same characteristics of security and stability immersed in a dimension of fidelity.[59]

The verb often is translated as "to be faithful", which has become the stereotypical meaning of this verb in *nifal,* as one can see in the pericope of 1Sam 22,14[60]: "...of all those in your service, who is more loyal (נֶאֱמָן) than David, son-in-law to the king, captain of your bodyguard, honoured in your household?'". The pericope of 1Samuel has a double implication. One is the presentation of David as a person who has high qualities, namely, David as being incomparable and superior to all the servants of King Saul, because he possesses like no other the quality of נֶאֱמָן. The second implication expresses a judicial argument on behalf of David who is not regarded in high esteem by King Saul. In both cases the term נֶאֱמָן embraces the dimension of innocence and fidelity together with the intention of exultation of the personage.[61]

The verb in *nifal* usually appears in judicial contexts in which it is necessary to have the participation of truthful and reliable witnesses. This means that the moral quality implied in the verb guarantees the certainty of the truth manifested by those who exemplify this characterization. This connotation is significant because the root

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[57] Weiser, "πιστεύω", 183-184; Joüon and Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, I, No. 40a.51a.

[58] Moberly, "אמן", 431; Wildberger, "אָמַן", 138.

[59] Jepsen, "אָמַן", 295.

[60] The text of 1Sam 22,14 is placed during the exile by Noth and Smend, but Frank Moore Cross places it during the time of the Monarchy of king Josiah, circa the seventh century (Campbell and O'Brien, *Unfolding the Deuteronomistic History,* 12-13.269-270; Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic,* 278-285; Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel,* 11-19.

[61] Ibid., 545; Mabee, "Judicial Instrumentality in the Ahimelech Story", 29. See also Note 30 of the same page. Other examples of נֶאֱמָן that present the same semantic notion are Num 12,7; Prov 11,13; 25,13; 27,6; Neh 13,13; 1Sam 22,14; Psalm 101,6; Job 12,20. These pericopes denote historical contexts that span from the exile and post exile, namely, from the Babylonian and Persian periods.

אמן is closely interconnected with the notion of truth. The Hebrew noun employed to signify the idea of truth is אֱמֶת which is precisely derived from the root אמן. Consequently the substantive which belongs to the same philological field (Wortfeld) of the root אמן, can be translated as firmness, security, trust, stability, and solidity.[62]

The same semantic spectrum, when applied to God, acquires a richer value by way of analogy. When God becomes the subject of the verb, multiple semantic levels interplay simultaneously in the narrative, so that the term expresses a rich polysemy that cannot be adequately articulated in any other translation. Hence, modern translations only offer or reflect one single dimension of the polysemy. In the Masoretic Text, the person of YHWH is essentially described with the notion of נֶאֱמָן that can be translated as faithful and constant (נֶאֱמָן). The nature of the Lord is secure, stable, reliable, and truthful. Those are essential qualities of his essence and for this reason Israel can trust in him because his nature is to be נֶאֱמָן.[63]

The *nifal* participle with this specific theological connotation appears very few times in the Masoretic Text describing the nature of YHWH. The three most important passages in which the term appears describing the *natura Dei* are Deut 7,9; Isa 49,7, and Jer 42,5.[64]

The Deuteronomistic theology does not admit any flaws in the representation of YHWH in its narratives.[65] For the Deuteronomistic author, the essence of YHWH is אָמַן, which also indicates that God is the primordial source of trust, protection,

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[62] Moberly, "אמן", 428-429; Jepsen, "אָמַן", 309-313; Brown, Driver and Briggs, "אֱמֶת", 54. Other examples of the same semantic field are Isa 8,2 (נֶאֱמָנִים) and Jer 42,5 (אֱמֶת וְנֶאֱמָן).

[63] Jepsen, "אָמַן", 295-296.

[64] The text of Isa 49 can be placed at the end of the Babylonian exile and the beginning of the Persian dominion (Stuhlmuller, "Deutero-Isaiah and Trito-Isaiah", 330). Regarding the book of Deuteronomy, the first speech of Moses (Deut 1,1-4,40) reflects eighth to seventh century material, the second speech (Deut 5-26) reflects the time of the Judean monarchy during the Persian Period and the Josianic reform of the seventh century BCE, and the third speech (Deut 29,2-32,47) reflects the exilic community during the Babylonian period, after the destruction of Jerusalem. Even though the material is archaic the final form of the book was established during the end of the exile (Brueggermann, *Deuteronomy,* 18-20; Lundbom, *Deuteronomy. A Commentary,* 6-14). The oracles of Jeremiah began to be collected at the end of the seventh century and the first half of the sixth century, but the final form of the book can be dated approximately at the end of the Babylonian exile or soon after it (Sharp, *Prophecy and Ideology in Jeremiah. Struggles for Authority in the Deutero-Jeremianic Prose,* 1-7).

[65] Von Rad, *Teologia dell'Antico Testamento* 1, 259; 265-266; 379-382. The hagiographers of the Deuteronomistic history had created a theological opus based on the careful selection of literary material in order to present a theological exposition of the History of Israel determined by the invariable faithfulness of YHWH and the disloyalty of his people. See Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture,* 236-237; Campbell and O'Brien, *Unfolding the Deuteronomistic History,* 20-22; Richter, "Deuteronomistic History", 222-223.

nurturing, and security. Therefore, any manifestations of the connotations embraced in the Wortfeld of אָמַן, have their own origin and supreme manifestations in YHWH himself. This also means that all the manifestations of the verb אָמַן—in all its conjugations— express and describe the essence of YHWH. All of YHWH's personal revelations through the Old Testament narratives essentially define the notion of faith which implies fidelity, security, trust, protection, and truth because all of them come from the paternal and maternal love of YHWH who never abandons his own children. The pericope of Deut 7,9 embraces these theological notions.[66]

The text describes this essential detail of YHWH's nature that is interconnected with his being נֶאֱמָן in the performance of his covenant. This fundamental characteristic expressed with the notion of חֶסֶד, can be translated as goodness, gentleness, and affection that also connotes stability and love. According to this divine love (חֶסֶד), God chooses Israel not because of the merits and high moral standards of the people but because his choice comes from his pure divine initiative. The divine selection, then, is based on his חֶסֶד and divine promise offered to Israel's ancestors (see Deut 7,7-8). The experience of security by Israel is pragmatic in the person of God who always manifests himself through concrete deeds done throughout Israel's history, revealing a relationship of constant love and interaction with his people. This choice implies the proper responsibilities and obligations through an exclusive relationship, in which every single party must keep himself faithful to the stipulations implied in the covenant.[67]

For this reason, the obedience of Israel to the divine law (*Torah* and *mitzvoth*) becomes the concrete and existential dimension in which the communion with God is experienced and established. The great faults and unfaithfulness of Israel towards YHWH provoked his righteous retribution because God is always faithful. Therefore, he has to punish his children as a *paidagogos* has to discipline the children under his care. His didactic behavior does not come out of rage but out of love so Israel can learn from its own mistakes. In this manner YHWH continues to manifest his fidelity and goodness towards those who come to establish a personal relationship of love with him.

The book of the prophet Isaiah also applies the same semantic connotation when the sacred author talks about the fidelity of YHWH towards the one who has been rejected and marginalized. The figure of the servant of the Lord[68] embodies this

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[66] Wildberger, "אמן", 139.

[67] Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 100-102.

[68] Wildberger, "אמן", 139. The pericope in which this verse is inserted is Isa 49,7-13. The text corresponds to two epexegetical comments to the canticle of the servant of YHWH in Is 49,1-6. The first epexegetical comment is given by verse 7; the second is expressed in the verses 8-12. The pericope concludes with a hymnal stanza in verse 13. See Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55,* 304.

theological connotation in the book of the Deutero-Isaiah: "YHWH who is faithful (נֶאֱמָן)" (Isa 49,7). Verse 7 presents difficulties in its translation because of the obscurity of the verbal forms in the manuscripts of better textual tradition.[69] The Hebrew verse can be structured in two main parts. The first part is the voice of the narrator that introduces the divine utterance (7a). The second part is the divine proclamation addressed to the person that is known in the tradition as the servant of YHWH (7b). The thematic and theological content of the verse seems a paraphrase of the fourth canticle of the servant of the Lord in Isa 52,13-15.[70]

The verse follows the same narrative and theological pattern of humiliation of the servant who ultimately would be acknowledged by all the kings and exalted by God himself who according to his divine nature is faithful (נֶאֱמָן), namely, trust worthy because he did not abandon his servant. Verse 8 of the same chapter offers a theological explanation of the behavior of God described already with the term נֶאֱמָן in 49,7b. Therefore, Verse 8 is an epexegetical description of what it truly means to be faithful (נֶאֱמָן) according to the nature of YHWH. This elucidation is not based upon theoretical and abstract notions but on the tangible experiences of the existential reality of the person who is suffering, namely the servant. That is why Verse 8 in its description talks about the answer of God, the salvation, the help, and the restoration of the one who was previously rejected and marginalized.[71] The divine intervention has the peripeteic purpose. YHWH transforms the situation of the suffering servant so he can become an instrument of restoration for the people.

In the pericope of Jer 42,5 (יְהוָה בָּנוּ לְעֵד אֱמֶת וְנֶאֱמָן), YHWH is invoked as the truthful and faithful witness. The qualification of his nature is expressed by the sacred author as if God would be the only person to have the absolute essence of the attributes of אֱמֶת וְנֶאֱמָן. The described properties, according to the theological mindset reflected in the book of Jeremiah, are fundamental qualities of the *natura divina Dei.* Hence, in this particular narrative context, the expression יְהוָה בָּנוּ לְעֵד אֱמֶת וְנֶאֱמָן has a very exclusive characteristic because no human being can possess in an absolute manner the attributes of אֱמֶת וְנֶאֱמָן in his or her ontological nature.[72]

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[69] Childs, *Isaiah,* 386.

[70] Ibid.; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55,* 349.

[71] "Thus says YHWH: At the time of my favour I have answered you, on the day of salvation I have helped you. I have formed you and have appointed you to be the covenant for a people, to restore the land, to return ravaged properties" (Is 49,8 NJB).

[72] Jepsen, "אָמַן", 295. The pericope of Jer 42,1-6 describes the petition of part of the people of Israel. They request the intercession of Jeremiah in front of YHWH. the verse 5 expresses a solemn oath that states the true nature of YHWH and the trust that the people have placed in him. The function of the

Portraying the verbal form of אמן in *hifil* through the semantic view of *qal*

The causative conjugation called *hifil*[73] predominates in the Wortfeld of the root אמן. The *hifil* form of the verb appears 52 times, expressing the meaning of security and stability that commonly is translated as "to trust". The LXX translates the verb אמן 45 times, out of the 52 presences in the Masoretic Text, with the verb πιστεύω-πιστεύειν, and five times with the verb ἐμπιστεύω.[74]

The *hifil* of אָמַן implies the semantic idea of "to say amen with conviction to all its implied existential consequences".[75] This means that the verbal connotation implies the acknowledgment that the person who speaks or the object of the conversation-affirmation are considered secure, stable, and reliable, meaning that they are true since there is no doubt that they do not exist. The most common translation for this verbal conjugation is "to believe" or "to trust" because these English verbs embrace the acceptance and acknowledgment that the other person (or object) is authentic and infallible.[76] But is it possible to discover the basic meaning of *qal* in the theological connotation of אָמַן in *hifil*? My proposal continues to be a positive respond.

Regarding this query, Walther Eichrodt presents a significant observation that states that the *hifil* הֶאֱמִין can be properly translated as "to consider firm, trustworthy, to find to be reliable" as way to positively describe the relationship with God. But he also affirms that "since the basic meaning of the root *ʾmn* in Arabic is to be secure, out of danger, one could choose as the preferable translation of the Hebrew *heʾemin,*

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oath pretends to convince Jeremiah that the people's intention is sincere. See Lundbom, *Jeremiah 37–52. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary,* 128-129.131.

[73] Joüon and Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* I, No. 54a.

[74] The LXX predominantly translates the *hifil* form of the verb אָמַן with the verb πιστεύω, that often is rendered in English with the verb "to believe" (see Gen 45,26; 1 Kgs 10,7), "to trust," and "to obey." But these possible translations of the Hebrew word cannot totally embrace all the semantic levels implied in the Hebrew root of אמן. The Greek translation already filters through the Western experience and culture as a rich spectrum of nuances embodied in the Hebrew term. The cultural change manifested in the language establishes also a new semantic context of expression. In Greek, the notion of the lemma πιστεύω emphasizes more a noumenal dimension—cognitive or intellectual process—of the action of believing, as it is found especially in the classic Hellenistic literature. One may do the semantic connections with other vital aspects embodied in the personal or communal relationship signified with אָמַן especially the notion of trusting (1Sam 27,12). However, the semantic ramifications connected and discovered by a reader are not enough for the Greek verb to embrace the vast spectrum of vital nuances and meanings embraced in the Hebrew root. Consequently, the phenomenon of faith expressed with אָמַן is richer than the semantic value expressed with the verb πιστεύω. See Bultmann, "πιστεύω", 175-182.

[75] Weiser, "πιστεύω", 186; Jepsen, "אָמַן", 300.

[76] Wildberger, "אמן", 142.

to regard as assured, to find security in".[77] Eichrodt recognizes the semantic notion of *qal* implied in the *hifil* form but through its Arabic parallel, indicating that the *hifil* of "to trust and to believe" implies the notion of protection, care, and security expressed in *qal.*

An illustrative example of this semantic line is offered in the pericope of Exod 4,1-9.[78] The episode describes different signs given by YHWH in order to confirm the authority of Moses ahead of Israel. The recurring use of the root אמן in *hifil* is very significant, since it appears a total of five times in nine verses, i.e., 4,1 (לֹא־יַאֲמִינוּ), 4,5 (יַאֲמִינוּ), 4,8 (יַאֲמִינוּ), (וְהֶאֱמִינוּ) y 4,9 (יַאֲמִינוּ). The verb that traditionally is trans-lated as "to trust," embraces a more complex theological and social connotation because it expresses a notion that goes beyond the simple act of accepting Moses as a leader. The lexeme conveys the certainty that the leader is trustworthy because God himself has chosen him and has approved his appointment through visible signs. The *semeia* communicate a phenomenological dimension that leads Israel to the cognition and conviction that YHWH is acting through his leader, Moses.[79]

The usage of הֶאֱמִין (*hifil*), applied in a human context, signifies the basic attitude of total trust in which the action of believing is strictly intertwined with the act of trusting, e.g., 1Sam 27,12 (וַיַּאֲמֵן); Prov 26,25 (אַל־תַּאֲמֶן־בּוֹ); Job 4,18 (יַאֲמִין).[80] In the moments in which a person addresses God using the verb אָמַן in *hifil* form, then such information simultaneously expresses a declaration that God, according to his own nature, is essentially נֶאֱמָן. In other words, it would be the equivalent of professing an "amen" to whatever God is and commands with all the ontological implications that YHWH himself entails. The passages of Exod 14,31(וַיַּאֲמִינוּ) [81] and Exod 19,9 (יַאֲמִינוּ)[82] illustrate this connotation.

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[77] Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament,* II, 276; Jepsen, "אָמַן", 298.

[78] The book of Exodus reflects material and layers of composition that can be dated between the ninth and eighth century BCE, but there is also material that reflects the post-exilic era, during the Persian dominion and the beginning of the second Temple era, time in which probably was established the book in its final form (Bruckner, *Exodus,* 8-10; Meyers, *Exodus,* 16-18).

[79] Durham, *Exodus,* 44-46.

[80] The texts of the books of Proverbs and Job indicate the use of the *hifil* in the Wisdom literature that predominates during the Persian period (Sneed, *The Social World of the Sages. An Introduction to Israelite and Jewish Wisdom Literature,* 302; 328-329).

[81] The verses of Exod 14,30-31 present synthetic précis of Chapter 14. In the last two verses the sacred author affirms the superiority of YHWH who overcame the Egyptian power. See Durham, *Exodus,* 197.

[82] Exod 19,9 makes reference to the advent of YHWH who demands a proper preparation where God can speak openly to Moses in a public setting. The purpose of this public setting is to ratify Moses as the unquestionable leader of the people. See Durham, *Exodus,* 264.

The reader must observe that the action of believing is certified with the visible deeds (*semeia*) through the events described in the narrative of Exodus.[83] What is the meaning of this? In the transformational process of the strengthening faith of Israel, the wonderful deeds of YHWH are the fundamental proof of his divine existence. The Old Testament describes the personal relationship of Israel with YHWH —and vice a versa—through the unfolding events of the human history that are interpreted and experienced through the eyes of the Israelite spirituality.

That faith, resulting from the historical manifestations of YHWH, becomes a certain "knowledge" (*scientia*) that God truly exists and acts on behalf of his people, protecting them as a father and mother simultaneously. God is consequently genuine, true, and undisputable in the theological Israelite mindset. Faith is a kind of cognition or knowledge that comes as a consequence of a personal experience of God who interacts with his own people. This assertion indicates that faith is a *scientia Dei*.

The Old Testament does not describe faith according to epistemological definitions of the Western philosophical mindset. Faith, in the first Testament, embraces concrete and pragmatic conceptions that came out of the experiences of God's deeds on behalf of his people. It is a phenomenological understanding of faith that implies the complete abandonment into the hands of God who is as certain and reliable as parents are for their children.[84] The liberation from Egypt, for example, is a concrete proof of the firmness and veracity of YHWH. Each act of his divine salvation in the Old Testament offers a corroboration of the infallibility of YHWH.[85]

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[83] The only source of salvation is YHWH and Israel has seen it (וַיַּרְא): Exod 14,31. See Durham, *Exodus,* 197.

[84] See 2Chron 20,20: "¡Trust (הַאֲמִינוּ) in the Lord, and you shall be free!"

[85] The trust in God many times is narrated from a negative point of view in the sacred texts because Israel continuously disobeys God and his commandments, giving proof to their flawed trust that makes them incapable of honoring the mitzvoth of the covenant. The Israelite behavioral pattern demonstrates an essential skepticism to the divine providence, manifesting itself in sharp contrast with God's faithful deeds. The action of believing requires, then, the action of acceptance that God himself is true and operates always in favor of the one who has placed his/her trust in him. The semantic notion of faith—manifested in the *hifil* verbal conjugation—implies the capacity of abandonment into the divine Providence with the same confidence that young children—or a baby—rely on the care of their parents. This line of thought indicates that the notion of an existential knowledge that is not based upon abstract philosophical ideas but on the personal and real experiences of God's care that relies on the semantic notion of the parent-child relationship. The parental analogy expressed in the *qal* conjugation remains, therefore, as the basic semantic platform of this nuance signified in *hifil*. See Deut 9,23: "You rebelled against the command of Yahweh your God and would not believe him (וְלֹא הֶאֱמַנְתֶּם) or listen to his voice (וְלֹא שְׁמַעְתֶּם בְּקֹלוֹ)" (*NJB*); Deut 1,32 "But for all this, you put no faith (מַאֲמִינִם) in Yahweh your God" (*NJB*); Psalm 78,22 "because they had no faith in God (הֶאֱמִינוּ), no trust (בָטְחוּ) in his power to save" (*NJB*).

Another illustrative example of this line of thought is given by the comments of Von Rad when he analyzes the faith of Abraham, in Gen 15,6. The post-exilic text uses the verb in *hifil* (וְהֶאֱמִן), meaning "to have faith or to believe" which is the typical connotation of אמן in *hifil*[86]. However, Von Rad proposes as a more appropriate translation of this verb the meaning of "to make oneself secure in YHWH" which is a more common meaning of parental care and protection expressed in the *qal* conjugation.[87] For this reason, the faith in the Old Testament implies the total self giving into the hands of God which is based upon the parental notion of protection, in the same way Abraham did (Gen 15,6), or a defenseless person, like a child must do in putting his or her life into the care of a protector. This also implies that whatever God utters has the certainty that it would be accomplished, according to the basic schema of divine utterance and fulfillment (e.g., Exod 4,1.31; 19,9).

The verb אָמַן consequently embraces a complex personal attitude inferring the fear of the Lord, meaning that he certainly exists and is true to his nature (cfr. Isa 8,13). Because of his divine character, his relationship with the people, or with particular individuals, requires obligations and responsibilities that simultaneously are complemented with reverence, awe, trust, and obedience. Dimensions that make Israel feel secure and protected like a child in the arms of his parents. Isa 28,16 illustrates this notion further by emphasizing the imagery of a solid and firm rock that has been tested through time.[88]

The "historical dimension" implies the retrospective view that serves to guarantee any person who has placed his/her trust and security in YHWH that no matter what happens the faithful will not be disappointed. Through the historical proof of the past events the faithful have certainty that the same divine behavioral pattern remains constant through time, implying that the same parental activity of God will continue forward into the present time with an implicit eschatological dimension.[89]

Among their contextual diversities, the Psalms present magnificent pheno-menological expressions of faith that are so practical and realistic that the psalmist

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[86] Von Rad, *Genesis,* 184-185.

[87] Idem, *Teologia dell'Anico Testamento* 1, 203.

[88] The notion of the tested rock has a rich hermeneutical history manifested in the Psalms (e.g., Psalm 27,5; 28,1; 61,13) and the prophetic writings. The image suggest theological, spiritual, and architectural notions. See Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39,* 40-41. The pericope of Isa 7,4-9 proclaims an oracle of salvation. See 9 (לֹא תַאֲמִינוּ כִּילֹא תֵאָמֵנוּ) offers a partial conclusion in a form of an admonition. The purpose is to offer an invitation to trust in YHWH because he is true and secure. The oracle is proclaimed during difficult times, especially in a context of imminent war. God particularly wants in these difficult times the people to put their faith and trust in him. See Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12,* 285; 289-291.

[89] Kaiser, *Der Prophet Jesaja Kapitel 13–19,* 201.

has the conviction that whatever God proclaims must be accomplished and fulfilled during his own span of life. The confidence of the psalmist makes him place his faithful trust in YHWH in his present time. An illustrative sample of this theological tradition is Psalm 27,13[90] that affirms: "This I believe (הֶאֱמַנְתִּי): I shall see the goodness of Yahweh, in the land of the living."

The psalmist utters an absolute belief in YHWH that rejects any possible scenario of accomplishment in the world to come (eschatological dimension). The fulfillment of the divine promises will not be experienced in the future generations but in the present time of the psalmist. Such unconditional certainty does not give any space for the waiting time that is beyond the present vital moment.

The Faith of Israel through the semantic stratum of אמן in *qal*: conclusions

The conception of אָמַן in *qal* conjugation is exclusively circumscribed within a parental and familial semantic context while at the same time it is the primordial platform of meaning upon which the other conjugations and derived lemmas express their various meanings.[91] The original value of the Hebrew verb in *qal* expresses the care, protection, nourishment, sustenance, and embracing of a parent for his/her children. Therefore, the cross-domain mapping derived from the fundamental notions implied in *qal* offers six primordial semantic fields as conceptual integrative lines of meanings:

1. *Family relationship as the source domain semantic experience.* The parents are the protectors, nurturers, educators, and guardians of the children who are defenseless and incapable of self-sustaining. The family relationship that embraces all these responsibilities is based on love. The extended notion of family also implies that the same aforesaid responsibilities are performed by the grandparents and all the members of the extended family, typical of the ancient Semitic mindset. The family bond becomes a source of identity for their members, connotation that describes the theological and spiritual relationship of YHWH with Israel manifested in the Old Testament.

2. *Attitude of protection.* It is motivated by the love of a mother or father for their children. The same behavior can be performed by a mentor, guardian, or nurse. The

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[90] The Psalm 27 may reflect a pre-exilic situation as well as a time of the end of the exile and post-exile. It is impressive the wisdom character of the psalm that alludes to a post-exilic period. The Psalm 27 can be divided in two clear sections: (1) 27,1-6 which expresses the courage of faith of the psalmist in God; and (2) 27,7-14 which expresses the path that leads to God, describing the faith and conviction of the psalmist in the Lord (Weiser, *The Psalms. A Commentary,* 91-95.244-246.250-251; Schaefer, *Psalms*, 66-69).

[91] See 2 Sam 4,4; Ruth 4,16; Num 11,2; 2 Kgs 10,1.5; Esther 2,7.

level of protection increases according to the intensity of the personal relationship. It is a semantic notion derived from the family relationship. The same semantic profile is embraced in the relationship of YHWH with Israel through the experience of the Exodus, wandering in the desert, and throughout the Babylonian exile.

3.   *Attitude of nourishment.* It is motivated by the proper love and care of the parents. The ones responsible for raising children feel compelled to nurture them in order to sustain and preserve their lives in the best way possible. It is a semantic notion derived from the family relationship. The same notion is applied to the theological dimension of faith in Old Testament as it is illustrated in the Exodus, Numbers, Psalms, Deutero and Trito Isaiah.

4.   *Didactic role.* It is appropriate for parents to become the *paidagogoi* of their children. The education guarantees the preservation of traditions and behavioral patterns that are considered to be righteous. From a theological point of view, YHWH is the *paidagogos* of Israel.

5.   *Sense of security.* It is a proper response by children or young persons who come to comprehend this awareness through experiencing security and protection from the one who loves them. It is a pragmatic knowledge through repetitive experiences. Through experiences of hardships, the faithful remnant of Israel finds the courage to persevere through their trust in God. It is a semantic notion derived from the family relationship and the attitude of protection embraced in the meaning of אָמַן (*qal*).

6.   *Historical proof.* It is a semantic notion derived from the experience and knowledge of security and protection. Children who become adults would have a solid trust in their parents who always were committed to them. The constant and faithful attitude of protection, nourishment, and teachings of YHWH create a behavioral pattern that proves to be constant in the present and future events. It is a semantic notion derived from the semantic fields of family relationship (a) and the attitude of protection (b). The religious drama of Israel is their lack of anamnesis at the moment of remembering the deeds of YHWH on behalf of his people. However, the sacred hagiographers constantly remind the people of Israel that in the same manner how YHWH freed his people from the slavery and hardships in the past, in the same way YHWH will continue to deliver his faithful people from the hardships of the present and future.[92]

From a diachronic standpoint, the basic semantic notion of the root אמן manifested in *qal* has evolved throughout time. The notion of *qal* appears in texts that according to their final form can be located from the time of the exile and post-

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[92] The episode of a young David illustrates this historical and theological conception of "trust" and "faith" based upon the experiences of "protection": 1 Sam 17,34-37. See Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel,* 72.

exile, namely, from the Babylonian and Persian periods.[93] However, some of these texts may reflect a material or tradition that can be placed between the 8th and 7th century BCE.[94]

The same line of thought can be appreciated in the use of the basic meaning in its passive form (*nifal*) in Isa 60,4, indicating that even during the Persian period basic human experiences of parental care and protection are used in the root אמן even in *nifal* conjugation. Therefore, the basic semantic cognitive domain remains even though the theological and more abstract notions are being used simultaneously through the same root in *nifal* and *hifil.*

The traditional meanings expressed in *nifal* and *hifil* predominate in texts that can be placed during the time of the exile and post-exile.[95] It is significant the text of Jer 42,5, because its material began to be collected between the seventh and the sixth centuries BCE, thus the ontological notion of נֶאֱמָן used to describe the nature of YHWH appears as early as pre-exilic times of the Babylonian period or during the transition from the Assyrian to the Babylonian period.[96]

If the different meanings of the same root are used at the same time, which one supposes to be the most archaic or basic meaning? From the standpoint of the cognitive linguistics, the notions of *qal* become the most plausible option. Cognitive linguistics assumes the principle that the basic meaning is embodied, i.e., it is grounded in the vital human experience of corporeal existence.[97] The notions of parental care, protection, and nurture are the most basic bodily or corporeal experiences that any human being has since the moment of his/her birth.

This human experience serves as the experiential basis for understanding the more abstract notions of education, discipline, trust, faithfulness, faith, and belief. Therefore, the *qal* expresses a cognitive source domain from which the sacred authors try to implement their notions into the domain of God and the experience of the relationship existing between YHWH and Israel.[98] The basic meaning of *qal* remains

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[93] Isa 49, 14-26; Esther 2,7; Ruth 4,16; Num 11,12; 2 Kgs 10,1.5.

[94] See the references of Num 11,2 and 2Kgs 10,1.5.

[95] Examples in *nifal:* Isa 49,7; Deut 7,9; Jer 42,5; Num 12,7; Prov 11,13; 25,13; 27,6; Neh 13,13; 1 Sam 22,14; Psalm 101,6; Job 12,20. Examples in *hifil:* Exod 4,1-9; 14,31; 19,9; Gen 15,6; Isa 28,16; Psalm 27,13; 1Sam 27,12; Prov 26,25; Job ,18.

[96] The oracles of Jeremiah began to be collected at the end of the seventh century and the first half of the sixth century, but the final form of the book can be dated approximately at the end of the Babylonian exile or soon after it (Sharp, *Prophecy and Ideology in Jeremiah,* 1-7).

[97] Janda, "Cognitive Linguistics in the Year 2015", 134-135; Fitch, *The Evolution of Language,* 122-125; Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By,* 3-6.

[98] Janda, "Cognitive Linguistics in the Year 2015", 140-141.

as the substantial human experience that gives rise to a wide variety of abstract and theological connotations that serve as grammatical expressions of experiential faith that implies a parental relationship with God.[99]

These "semantic lines" give a broader significance to the notions of security, trust, fidelity, and truth expressed in the *nifal* and *hifil* of אמן and its derived forms or cognate substantives. These semantic interrelations between *qal* and the other forms of the Hebrew root have been neglected and marginalized at a philological and theological level. Through this theological essay I tried to emphasize the parental notion of the care and nourishment of a defenseless child, e.g., Israel, as the basic semantic substratum (source cognitive domain) upon which all the diverse semantic nuances of the verb אָמַן derive, making more evident the personal and exclusive relationship that exists between Israel and YHWH.

Therefore, the experience of faith in Israel is based upon a relationship of love with YHWH who is father and mother conjointly. According to this line of thought, one may comprehend all the metaphors and expressions of God's love as manifested in the Psalms, the *nevi'im,* and the expressions of faith through Jesus' parental relationship with his Father as revealed in the writings of the New Testament.[100]

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[99] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 25-26; Bybee, Perkins and Pagliuca, *The Evolution of Grammar. Tense, Aspect, and Modality in the Languages of the World,* 15-17.

[100] See Hosea 11,1-9 and Ps 72,19-22.

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