

RECOVERING THE SEMANTIC CONNOTATIONS OF THE VERB 'ĀMAN (אָמַן) IN QAL

DEMPSEY ROSALES ACOSTA
University of St. Thomas (Houston, TX)

1. INTRODUCTION

The biblical study of faith implies an understanding of the diverse semantic levels expressed in the Hebrew vocabulary within their respective literary contexts. Hence, the field of study is theological and philological. The source of Revelation manifests itself in a privileged form in the divinely inspired Scripture. For this reason a believer can speak of the double dimension of its authorship: the divine and the human¹. The human author communicates his or her experience of faith in the sacred text through the cultural and linguistic limitations, typical of the Semitic culture of ancient times. The Scripture, therefore, articulates in a theological manner diverse phenomenological manifestations of conviction and security derived from a personal relationship with God². Therefore, it is necessary to elucidate and clarify the basic meaning of the Old Testament vocabulary that has been used by the original authors in order to

1 This theological principle is stated by CVII, *Dei Verbum* no. 11: «Deum habent auctorem, atque ut tales ipsi Ecclesiae traditi sunt. In sacris vero libris conficiendis Deus homines elegit, quos facultatibus ac viribus suis utentes adhibuit, ut Ipso in illis et per illos agente, ea omnia eaque sola, quae Ipse vellet, ut veri auctores scripto traderent».

2 Cf. CVII, *Dei Verbum* no. 12.

express their personal relationship with Yhwh in concrete historical contexts. Following this line of 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 analysis is the methodology used to uncover 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 forms³. These «facts of language are interpreted from the perspective of a usage-based model, according to which language is built from actual usage events»⁴. Such historical contexts with its respective linguistics usage imply, other than the moment of the revelation itself, the expression of the revealed truth through the faith of Israel as it evolved from the moment of its concrete experience until it had been expressed in fixed theological and linguistic notions.

The current essay presents a semantic analysis of the verb of אָמַן under the approach of Sachexegese⁵ in order to highlight its most primordial levels of meanings which is a theological interpretation that expresses an essential aspect of the semantic analysis. This methodological approach emphasizes the effort to interpret the verb אָמַן in light of the central concern of the biblical texts which is theological in nature⁶. Consequently, the present semantic methodology offers a predominant synchronic Semasiology of the aforementioned verb that goes beyond the simplistic lexicographic analysis of the studied term⁷. 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

3 Cf. WILHEM EGGER, *Methodenlehre zum Neuen Testament. Einführung in linguistische und historisch-kritische Methode*, Freiburg: Herder, 1987, 92–93.

4 LAURA JANDA, «Cognitive Linguistics in the year 2015», *Cognitive Semantics* 1, no. 1 (2015): 131–154, esp. 131.

5 «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 – SOULEN, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism*, 165.

6 SOULEN – SOULEN, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism*, 165–166.

7 Cf. PETER ANDRASON – CHRISTO VAN DER MERWE, «The Semantic Potential of Verbal Conjugations as set of Polysemous Senses: The Qatal in Genesis», *Hebrew Studies* 56 (2015): 71–88, esp. 74.

of a term, and in the particular case of the shoresh אָמַן how we can 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 the alternative added meanings applied throughout specific historical contexts. While this present 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 OT. Such notions can imply a transformation of meaning that goes from a concrete and objective meaning of «protection, care, and security» to a more abstract and theological meaning that implies «faith, trust, or faithfulness»⁸.

Additionally, this present study of the Hebrew verb אָמַן in its qal conjugation is limited to the canonical text of the Masoretic Text⁹. However, through 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 אָמַן¹⁰.

8 T. C. Vriezen interprets the lexeme אָמַן 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 WALTHER EICHRODT, *Theology of the Old Testament*, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967, II, 276, note 2 of the same page. See the tentative of translation and interpretation of the hifil form of אָמַן using the qal semantic connotations in GERHARD VON RAD, *Teologia dell' Antico Testamento*, Teologia delle tradizioni storiche d'Israele, Brescia: Paideia, I, 202–203; EICHRODT, *Theology of the Old Testament*, II, 276, especially note 2. For a diachronic analysis of the notion of faith in the OT, see EICHRODT, *Theology of the Old Testament*, II, 277–290.

9 The Masoretic text used is from KARL ELLIGER – WILHELM RUDOLPH, (dir.), *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1997.

10 Cf. WINFRIED NÖTH, *Handbook of Semiotics*, 106; SOULEN – 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. PIETER VERBURG, *Language and its Functions*, A historic-critical study of views concerning the functions of language from the pre-humanistic philology of Orleans to the rationalistic philology of Bopp. Studies in the History of the Language Sciences 84. Amsterdam – Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1998, 29–30.

2. THE VERB מִנַּח AS LEXIS OF FAITH

Faith, from the theological point of view of the Old Testament, is a response that mankind offers after having experienced the manifestations of God. This means that Yhwh has manifested himself first out of his own pure initiative. The response of faith is therefore a reaction that implies certainty that the other one, namely God, exists¹¹.

In the books of the Old Testament, the most important vocabulary¹² to express the notion of faith derives from the Hebrew root מִנַּח. This philological root cannot be found attested in Akkadian, Ugaritic, and Phoenician, but it has a great variety of semantic nuances in the biblical Hebrew¹³, depending on 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 affirmation of Moberly, who says:

«There are five forms of the 'mn root that are of theological significance: the two related nouns 'emet and 'emûnâ, the

11 Cf. ALFONS WEISER, «πιστεύω», *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* VI, 187.

12 The vocabulary of faith is not limited to the philological family of the Hebrew root of מִנַּח. There are other important terms that signify the experience of faith, e.g., the verb תִּירָא «to trust» (Deut 33:12) and יָרָא «to fear, to respect». The latter verb is used to signify moral obedience and religious obligation (Gen 22,12). See Walter Moberly, «מִנַּח», *New International Dictionary of the Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* I, 427; Idem, «תִּירָא», *NIDOTTE* I, 644–645; MAX SECKLER, «Glaube», in *Handbuch Theologischer Grundbegriffe*, ed. Heinrich Fries. Vol. II, München: Kösel, 1962, 528–529.

13 Cf. HANS WILDBERGER, «מִנַּח», *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* I, 134. Koehler and Baumgartner propose two different roots with the same consonants in Hebrew. According to these authors the first root (מִנַּח) 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 (מִנַּח) 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 Kings 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 LUDWIG KOEHLER – WALTER BAUMGARTNER, «מִנַּח», in *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Vol. I, Boston: Brill, 2001, 63–64; WILLIAM F. ALBRIGHT, «A Prince of Taanach of the Fifteenth Century», in *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 94 (1944) 18 and note 28 of the same page. The latter opinion does not convince many scholars and philologist as it is the case of Jepsen and Moberly who proposed only one Hebrew root, rejecting the opinion of Koehler, Baumgartner, and Albright. See ALFRED JEPSEN, «מִנַּח», *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* I, 294; MOBERLY, «מִנַּח», *NIDOTTE* I, 427–428.

adverb, 'āmēn, and the two forms of the verb ne'ē mān (ni.) and he'ē mīn (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.

I respectfully disagree with Moberly's opinion who follows the same line of thought of Wildberger¹⁵. These two important biblical scholars represent the predominant academic position regarding the qal of the lexeme אָמַן. The main academic opinion proposes that the most significant verbal forms of the shroesh אָמַן are ne'ē mān (nifal) and he'ē mīn (hifil), marginalizing or rejecting the theological importance of the qal conjugation. I confirm my perception when reading the theological articles of Moberly and Wildberger, the authors who do not dedicate any comments or references to the qal conjugation of the verb אָמַן.¹⁶ The academic position considers this conjugation insignificant under the theological and semantic dimension of faith manifested in the narratives of the Old Testament. Following this line of thought, the reader can infer that for the most common academic position the nifal and hifil binyanim of אָמַן are the original and basic semantic platform upon which the other semantic nuances, manifested in other conjugations of the same verb, find their respective semantic references, e.g., hofal, piel, pual, hithpael, and even qal. Therefore, the complete silence or omission of the qal binyan of the verb indicates that its meaning is equal to or equivalent to the meanings expressed in nifal and hifil.

Noticing the deafening silence of the analysis of the verb אָמַן in qal in the articles of the Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament (TLOT) and New International Dictionary of the Old Testament Theology and Exegesis (NIDOTTE), the following logical queries emerge: 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 through different semantic nuances that the Semitic

14 MOBERLY, «אָמַן», *NIDOTTE* I, 428.

15 Cf. WILDBERGER, «אָמַן», *TLOT* I, 134–157.

16 Cf. MOBERLY, «אָמַן», *NIDOTTE* I, 427–433; WILDBERGER, «אָמַן», *TLOT* I, 134–157; *Id.*, «Glauben im AT», *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 65 (1968): 129–159.

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 the expresses 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. For this reason it is also called the *Grundstamm*, i. e., the basic stem upon which are built the other conjugations or *binyanim*. 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 action²⁰. 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, namely *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. The purpose of this affirmation is therefore limited to the study of the lexeme קָמַח as a tentative 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

17 Cf. PAUL JOÜON – TAKAMITSU MURAOKA, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, Roma: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2000, I, no. 40a.

I, n. 40a (p. 124).

18 Ibid.

19 JOÜON – MURAOKA, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, I, n. 51a (p. 149).

20 JOÜON – MURAOKA, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, I, n. 54a (p. 160).

21 BILL ARNOLD – JOHN CHOI, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 49.

denying their particular semantic notions of faith and trust²². Consequently, it is possible to affirm that in the case of the root אָמַן, 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. For this reason it is essential to reconsider the significance of אָמַן in its qal conjugation, as a manner to rediscover its primordial meaning.

2.1. The verbal form of 'āman (אָמַן) in qal

The verb אָמַן in its qal conjugation appears only in active participle in feminine as well as in masculine²³. Each time that the verb appears in its simple active conjugation (qal) it is inserted in a paternal or maternal context. In general 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 MT 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 (אָמֶנֶה, the nurse), Isa 49:23 (אָמְנֵיךְ, your guardians), Ruth 4:16 (אָמֶנֶה, nurse), 2 Sam 4:4 (אָמֶנֶה, nurse), 2 Kings 10:1.5 (אָמְנֵי, protectors, guardians), and Esther 2:7 (אָמֶן, foster father/protector)²⁴. This means that the verb used in masculine and

22 For example the verb אָמַן 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 OT, it is never translate as «to believe or to have faith» by the LXX. JEPSEN, «אָמַן», 89; KOEHLER – BAUMGARTNER – STAMM, «אָמַן», in *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Leiden – Boston – Köln: Brill, 2001. I, 63–64, esp. 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.

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

24 Cf. FRANCIS BROWN – SAMUEL R. DRIVER – CHARLES BRIGGS, «אָמַן», in *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1951, 52.

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. 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 mouth²⁶. 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 faithfulness²⁷.

The text of Num 11:2, for example, describes the supplication of Moses to Yhwh which reflects an intimate maternal type of relationship. The episode shows the people of Israel as a burden, like capricious children and whimsical infants, and offers the rhetorical questions of «Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth?»²⁸ on the lips of Moses. Then the reader can 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 people²⁹. Only Yhwh is the one who has conceived (הָרָה) and given birth (יָלַד) to the people. For this

25 JANDA, «Cognitive Linguistics in the year 2015», 134.

26 Ibid.

27 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». VYVYAN EVANS – MELANIE GREEN, *Cognitive Linguistics: An Introduction*, Edinburg: Edinburg University Press, 2006, 591. The obvious phonological relation between the binyanim of הָרָה implies a semantic dependence; therefore the it is logical to assume the semantic notion of qal in the other conjugations of the same root.

28 The biblical citations are taken from the New Jerusalem Bible (Doubleday Press, 1985). Citations from other editions will be properly indicated.

29 Cf. HORST SEEBASS, *Numeri. Biblischer Kommentar Altes Testament*, Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2003, II, 49–50; MARTIN NOTH, *Numbers. A Commentary*, Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968, 86.

reason Yhwh must take care of the people as a nurse or protective mother (הָאֵמָן)³⁰. The qal participle אָמַן used is in masculine but its semantic value that is determined by the context is what expresses the behavioral pattern of a mother³¹.

The passage of Isa 49:23 (וְהָיוּ מְלָכִים אֲמִנִּיהָ וְשָׂרוּתֶיהָ מִיַּגְיָתָהּ) presents an important distinction between the plural qal participle אֲמִנִּיהָ and the feminine noun מִיַּגְיָתָהּ. The 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?» (עוֹלָה הֲתִשְׁכַּח אֶשֶׁה) Isa 49:15 JPS³²) or «she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?» (מִרְחֶם כְּרִדְבָטְנָהּ) 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.

The general structure of the pericope presents six parts: a) the lament of Sion (v. 14); b) the divine confirmation given in a form of a rhetorical question (v.15: see also Isa. 40:27–28); c) the promise of the reconstruction of the city: Jerusalem (vv.16–17); d) the re-population of the city (vv. 18–21); e) the return of the people

30 The maternal image used to describe the relationship of Yhwh with his people is rare in the OT. 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., Exod 19:4; Deut 32:11. See LUIS ALONSO SCHÖKEL, «Números», in *Biblia del Peregrino*. Antiguo Testamento. Prosa. Tomo I, Estella, Navarra: Verbo Divino, 1998, 295.

31 Cf. 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». A. GOMOLA, «From God is a Father to God is a Friend. Conceptual integration in metaphors for God in Christian Discourse», in *Applications of Cognitive Linguistics [ACL]: Cognitive Linguistics in Action: From Theory to Application and Back*, edited by Elzbieta Tabakowska, Michal Choinski, and Lukasz Wiraszka, 387–407. Berlin – New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2010, 388–397.

32 JPS: Jewish Publication Society of Holy Scriptures in 1917. Electronic text Copyright © 1995–98 by Larry Nelson (Box 1681, Cathedral City, CA 92235).

from the diaspora (vv. 22–23), and f) the proclamation of the divine protection³³.

The prophetic poem presents the figure of a mother (Sion) who is unprotected and abandoned. In her despair she invokes Yhwh (Isa 49:14) who replies as an 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 fitting that of a maternal love that radically changed the humiliating situation of the exiles. After experiencing the destruction of Jerusalem and the subsequent exile, Isa 49:23 describes a drastic transformation of the exiled people. The peripeteia of the event is described by the adoption of the kings of the nations who become their guardians and protectors (qal participle אֲמִןִּי), 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 servitude³⁴.

The verb אֲמִןִּי 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 it is described in Esther 2:7: וַיִּהְיֶה אִמֶּן אֶת־עֵסְתֵּר. The narrator uses the participle אֲמִןִּי that can be translated as foster father/protector or «the one who brings up». The term אֲמִןִּי describes Mordecai, in this particular context, with the characteristics of a paternal pedagogue who also exercises the cares of a mother³⁵. When Mordecai becomes

33 Cf. JOSEPH BLENKINSOPP, *Isaiah 40–55*. The Anchor Bible 19A, New York: Doubleday, 2000, 309–310. Westermann divides the pericope in three sections: a) vv. 14–20, b) 21–23 y c) 24–26. He uses the criteria of dispute and proclamation of salvation manifested in the poem. See CLAUS WESTERMANN, *Isaiah 40–66 A Commentary*. The Old Testament Library, Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969, 218.

34 Cf. LUIS ALONSO SCHÖKEL – JOSÉ LUIS SICRE DÍAZ, «Isaías», in *Profetas. Comentario*. Vol. I, Madrid: Cristiandad, 1987, 318; ANDREW WILSON, *The Nations in Deutero-Isaiah*. A Study on Composition and Structure. ANETS, Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1986, 282–284. 286–287; WESTERMANN, *Isaiah 40–66*, 220–221; PETER ACKROYD, «The Book of Isaiah», in *The Interpreters Commentary on the Bible*, ed. Charles Laymon, Nashville: Abingdon, 1971, 361.

35 Cf. JEPSEN, «אֲמִןִּי», *TDOT I* 294; JON LEVENSON, *Esther. A Commentary*. The Old Testament Library, Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox, 1997, 58; TIMOTHY BEAL, *Esther*. Berit Olam. Studies in Hebrew Narrative and Poetry, Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical, 1999, 27 and note 4 of the same page. Gerleman disputes the proposal of the root II of Koehler, Baumgartner, and Albright when he analyzes the participle אֲמִןִּי in Esther

the foster father of Esther, he also assumes the double responsibility of parental protection and didactic formation of the child. For this reason Gesenius suggests that the Greek παιδαγωγός is the most appropriate term to translate אָמַן in this context³⁶.

In the passage of Esther 2:20, the narrator affirms that Esther followed Mordecai's instructions while she was under his «care» (אָמַןָה). The feminine Hebrew noun אָמַןָה 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 root אָמַן and embodies the same semantic value of the qal participle used in Esther 2:7 (אָמַן)³⁷.

Another example of the usage of the verb in qal expresses the basic care and custody that one may offer to a child: «There were seventy of Ahab's sons in Samaria. Jehu sent to Samaria, to the authorities of the city, to the elders and to the guardians (הָאֲמָנִים) of Ahab's children» (2 Kings 10:1)³⁸. 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: אָמַנִים) who are the inner and most intimate group of the royal family. They protect and raise the future blood line, acting as foster-parents (parental dimension) and *paidagogoi* (didactic dimension). The אָמַנִים should guard and educate the princes with the attention and discipline implied in the future royal responsibilities of a monarch³⁹.

The passage of Ruth 4:16 maintains the same semantic line. The verse says: «and Naomi, taking the child, held him to her breast; and it was she who looked after him (לְאֲמָנָתָה)». It is essential to clarify that in this context the feminine participle אָמַנָה does

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. See GILLIS GERLEMAN, *Esther*. Biblischer Kommentar Altes Testament, Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1982, 78.

36 Cf. H. F. W. GESENIUS, «אָמַן», in *Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000, 58–59.

37 Cf. JEPSEN, «אָמַן», *TDOT* I, 294; GERLEMAN, *Esther*, 83.

38 The pericope of 2 Kings 10:5 offers the same semantic notion: הַזְקֵנִים וְהָאֲמָנִים אֶל־יְהוּדָה לְאִמֵּר וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶשְׁרֵי־עַל־הַבַּיִת וְאֶשְׁרֵי־עַל־הַעִיר

39 Cf. JOHN GRAY, *I–II Kings. A Commentary*. The Old Testament Library, Philadelphia, Westminster, 1970, 553–554.

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 מִיָּקֵת (breast-feeder) from the verb יָקַת (to breast-feed). It would be erroneous to deduce that the latter verb is a synonym of מָנַח according to the similarity of maternal contexts. Naomi assumes the responsibility of raising a child according to a maternal and pedagogical dimension⁴⁰.

Following the semantic line of the qal conjugation manifested in the aforementioned texts, one can deduce that the primordial meaning of the verb מָנַח is «to take care and guide responsibly»⁴¹, or «to protect, to nurture, and to educate»⁴². Therefore, the most primeval semantic level of מָנַח in qal is not identical with the meanings expressed in nifal and hifil because «in forma qal non apparet significatio credendi»⁴³.

The qal conjugation, being the simplest in the Hebrew verbal system, has the value of being the basic conjugation in comparison with others. This implies that qal expresses the most fundamental semantic value of the Hebrew root מָנַח. 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 modalities of meaning built upon the basic semantic value expressed in qal⁴⁴. 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

40 Cf. JACK SASSON, *Ruth. A new Translation with a Philological Commentary and a Formalist-Folklorist Interpretation*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1979, 172.

41 Cf. JEPSEN, «מָנַח», *TDOT* I, 294; PAUL JOÜON, *Ruth. Commentaire philologique et exégétique*, Roma: Biblical Institute, 1986, 94.

42 Cf. SOLOMON MANDELKERN, *Veteris Testamenti Concordantiae Hebraicae atque Chaldaicae*, Graz: Akademische Druck-U Verlagsanstalt, 1937, I, 108.

43 JUAN ALFARO, «Fides in terminologia biblica», *Gregorianum* 42, no. 3 (1961): 464.

44 Cf. JOÜON – MURAOKA, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, I, nos. 51.54.

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»⁴⁵.

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 behave 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 children⁴⁶.

2.2. Understanding 'āman (אָמַן) in nifal through the lens of qal

The nifal conjugation of אָמַן expresses the reflexive or passive dimensions of the simplest action or verbal conjugation which is qal⁴⁷. Based upon this basic definition of the nifal conjugation aforementioned, the position of Moberly and Wildberger lacks a solid logic base of analysis because they reject the qal. The nifal conjugation of אָמַן predominantly appears in the MT in participle: approximately 32 times, with 5 presences in the perfect tense, and eight recurrences in the imperfect⁴⁸.

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 אָמַן has the maternal connotations of a person who

45 JOÜON – MURAOKA, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, I, n. 40a.

46 See part of the academic debate regarding the basic meaning of the root אָמַן in WILDBERGER, «אָמַן», *TLOT* I, 136; ID., «Glauben im AT», *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 65 (1968) 129–159; EGON PFEIFFER, «Der alttestamentliche Hintergrund der liturgischen Formel Amen», *Kerygma und Dogma* 4 (1958): 129–141.

47 Cf. JOÜON – MURAOKA, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, I, n. 51a.

48 Cf. JEPSEN, «אָמַן», *TDOT* I, 294. In the static data Jepsen omits the pericopes of Hosea 5:9; 12:1 and 1Chron 17:24. The reason of the omission is the corrupted and obscure state of the texts.

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 carried (הַיָּמִינִים) on the hip». This action embraces the notion of covering-embracing the baby with extreme care and that is why this has to be very close to the person's body. The purpose of the statement is to describe 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». Traditionally, the text of Isa 60:4 has been placed in a post exilic historical period⁴⁹, that coincides with the period of the second Temple era and the Persian period⁵⁰. Thus the pericope of Isa 60:4-9 describes Zion glorified a people who will be accepted as the Lord's worshippers⁵¹. Consequently, this pericope portrays the basic qal connotation manifested in nifal in a post-exilic literature. 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 exile⁵². During this life setting, the Trito-Isaiah uses the basic objective meaning (parental care) of הַיָּמִינִים that remains present in pericopes whose historical context may last during the Babylonian and Persian periods⁵³.

The paternal and maternal notion, however, remains as the basic semantic substratum which expresses the primary meaning

49 Joseph Blenkinsopp affirms that the Trito Isaiah is the result of different hands of redaction during a long period of time. Blenkinsopp represents the majority of the modern academic opinion. Nevertheless the setting of the Trito Isaiah is predominately set in the post exile. BLENKINSOPP, *Isaiah 56-66*, 59; PAUL NISKANEN, *Isaiah 56-66*, Berit Olam. Studies in Hebrew Narrative and Poetry. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2014, xi-xii, especially notes 8-9.

50 Cf. VON RAD, *Teologia dell'Antico Testamento*, II, 326-329; MICHAEL THOMPSON, *Isaiah 40-66*, Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001, xxix-xxx; JOHN OSWALT, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66*, Grand Rapids, MI - Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 1998, 3-6.

51 Cf. ALEC MOTYER, *Isaiah, An Introduction and Commentary*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2009, 420-421.

52 «Ma, diversamente dai profeti preesilici, il Tritoisaia è alle prese con un popolo divenuto non tanto exteriormente presuntuoso, quanto piuttosto di poca fede». VON RAD, *Teologia dell'Antico Testamento*, II, 328.

53 Cf. NISKANEN, *Isaiah 56-66*, xii-xiii.

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) which serves as a source domain for metaphors of faith and trust which is the abstractions or conceptualization of theological notions to develop⁵⁴. 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 and for that reason 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 a similar experience 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 protected them like a mother and father (meaning in qal). The relationship that exists between God and Israel manifests the same dynamics of a family 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 conjugations⁵⁵.

The term אָמַן (nifal) embraces a variety of meanings that generally can be translated in English with the terms 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 אָמַן (nifal) as synonymous to 'emet y 'emûnâ⁵⁶. When the lexeme is applied to a very specific person in the Old Testament, the indicated personage manifests the characteristics of security and stability immersed in a dimension of

54 Cf. JANDA, «Cognitive Linguistics in the year 2015», 140–141; GEORGE LAKOFF, «Conceptual Metaphor. Contemporary Theory of Mataphor», in *Cognitive Linguistics: Basic Readings*, edited by Dirk Geeraerts, René Dirven, and John R. Taylor, 185–238. Berlin – New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2006, 185–186.232–233.

55 Cf. ALFONS WEISER, «οὐεπιστι», *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* VI, 183–184; JOÛON – MURAOKA, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, I, nos. 40a.51a.

56 Cf. MOBERLY, «אָמַן», *NIDOTTE* I, 431; WILDBERGER, «אָמַן», *TLOT* I, 138.

fidelity⁵⁷. The verb often is translated as to be faithful, which has become the stereotype meaning of this verb in nifal, as one can see in the pericope of 1 Sam. 22:14: «Ahimelech replied to the king: Of all those in your service, who is more loyal (נִקְדָּשׁ) than David, son-in-law to the king, captain of your bodyguard, honored in your household?». The pericope of 1 Samuel has a double function. One is the presentation of David as a person who has high qualities, namely, David is incomparable and superior to all the servants of king Saul, because he possesses like no other the quality of נִקְדָּשׁ. 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 נִקְדָּשׁ embraces the dimension of innocence and fidelity together with the intention of exultation of the personage⁵⁸.

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 נִקְדָּשׁ 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 נִקְדָּשׁ. Consequently the substantive which belongs to the same philological field (Wortfeld) of the root נִקְדָּשׁ, can be translated as firmness, security, trust, stability, and solidity⁵⁹.

These narrative contexts describe the interrelations between human characters through the usage of the Wortfeld of נִקְדָּשׁ. However when the same semantic spectrum is applied to God, it acquires 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

57 Cf. JEPSEN, «נִקְדָּשׁ», *TDOT* I, 295.

58 Cf. DAVID TOSHIO TSUMURA, *The First Book of Samuel*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007, 545; CHARLES MABEE, «Judicial Instrumentality in the Ahimelech Story», in *Early Jewish and Christian Exegesis: Studies in memory of William H. Brownlee*, ed. Craig A. Evans and William F. Stinespring, Atlanta: Scholars, 1987, 29 and note 30 of the same page. Other examples of נִקְדָּשׁ that present the same semantic notion are Num 12:7; Prov 11:13; 25:13; 27:6; Neh 13:13; 1 Sam 22:14; Ps 101:6; Job 12:20.

59 Cf. MOBERLY, «נִקְדָּשׁ», *NIDOTTE* I, 428–429; JEPSEN, «נִקְדָּשׁ», *TDOT* I, 309–313; BROWN – DRIVER – BRIGGS, «נִקְדָּשׁ», 54. Other examples of the same semantic field are Isa 8:2 (נִקְדָּשׁ) and Jer 42:5 (נִקְדָּשׁ).

adequately articulated in any translation. Hence modern translations only offer or reflect one single dimension of the polysemy. In the MT the person of Yhwh is essentially described with the notion of אָמַן that can be translated as faithful and constant: «because of Yhwh who is faithful (אָמַן), the Holy One of Israel who has chosen you» (Isa. 49:7). 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 אָמַן⁶⁰.

The nifal participle with this specific theological connotation appears very few times in the MT 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.

The Deuteronomistic theology does not admit any flaws in the representation of Yhwh in its narratives⁶¹. For the Deuteronomistic author, the essence of Yhwh is אָמַן, which also indicates that God is the primordial source of trust, protection, 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 notions⁶². The text says: «From this you can see that Yhwh your God is the true God, the faithful God who, though he is true (אָמַן) to his covenant and his faithful love (אָהֵב) for a

60 Cf. JEPSEN, «אָמַן», *TDOT* I, 295–296.

61 Cf. VON RAD, *Teologia dell'Antico Testamento. Teologia delle tradizioni storiche d'Israele*, Brescia: Paideia, 1972, I, 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 BREVARD CHILDS, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987, 236–237; ANTHONY CAMPBELL – MARK O'BRIEN, *Unfolding the Deuteronomistic History. Origins, Upgrades, Present Text*, Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000, 20–22; SANDRA RICHTER, «Deuteronomistic History», in *Dictionary of the Old Testament Historical Books*, ed. Bill T. Arnold and G. M. Williamson, Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 2005, 222–223.

62 Cf. WILDBERGER, «אָמַן», *TLOT* I, 139.

thousand generations as regards those who love him and keep his commandments»⁶³.

The text describes an essential detail of Yhwh's nature that is interconnected with his being נִאֲמָן in the performance of his covenant. This essential characteristic is expressed with the notion of רַחֲמֵי, which can be translated as goodness, gentleness, and affection that also connotes stability and love. According to this divine love (רַחֲמֵי), 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 which is based on his רַחֲמֵי 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 covenant⁶⁴. For this reason the obedience of Israel to the law (Torah and mitzvoth) of Yhwh becomes the concrete and existential dimension in which the communion with God is experienced and established in history. The great faults and unfaithfulness of Israel towards Yhwh provoked his righteous reaction of retribution because God is always righteous and 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 him⁶⁵.

The book of the prophet Isaiah also applies the same semantic connotation when the sacred author talks about the fidelity of Yhwh

63 כִּי־יִתְּנָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים הָאֵלִי הַנְּאֻמָּנוּ שְׂמֵר הַבְּרִית וְהַסֵּד לְאֲבוֹתַי וְלִשְׂמֵרֵי (מִצְוֹתוֹ) [מִצְוֹתַי] לְאֵלֶיךָ דָּוִד: וְהִדְבִּיחָהּ.

64 Cf. RICHARD NELSON, *Deuteronomy. A Commentary*. The Old Testament Library, Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox, 2002, 100–102.

65 Cf. NORMAN GOTTWALD, «The book of Deuteronomy», in *The Interpreters Commentary on the Bible*, ed. Charles M. Laymon, Nashville: Abingdon, 1971, 107–108; FÉLIX GARCÍA LÓPEZ, «Deuteronomio», in *Comentario al Antiguo Testamento*, ed. Santiago Guijarro Oporto and Miguel Salvador García, Salamanca: Verbo Divino, 1997, 267–268.

towards the one who has been rejected and marginalized. The figure of the servant of the Lord⁶⁶ embodies this theological connotation in the book of the Deutero-Isaiah: «Thus says Yhwh, the redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, to the one who is despised, detested by the nation, to the slave of despots: Kings will stand up when they see, princes will see and bow low, because of Yhwh who is faithful (אָמַן), the Holy One of Israel who has chosen you» (Isa 49:7). Verse 7 presents difficulties in its translation because of the obscurity of the verbal forms in the manuscripts of better textual tradition⁶⁷. The Hebrew verse can be structured in two main parts. The first part is the voice of the narrator that introduces the divine utterance (7^a). The second part is the divine proclamation addressed to the person that is known in the tradition as the servant of Yhwh (7^b). The thematic and theological content of the verse seems a paraphrase of the fourth canticle of the servant of the Lord in Isa 52:13–15⁶⁸. 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 (אָמַן), namely, trust worthy because he did not abandon his servant⁶⁹. Verse 8 of the same chapter offers a theological explanation of the behavior of God described already with the term אָמַן in 49:7^b. Therefore, verse 8 is an exegetical description of what it truly means to be faithful (אָמַן) 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 marginalized⁷⁰. The divine intervention has the peripeteic pur-

66 Cf. WILDBERGER, «אָמַן», *TLOT I*, 139. The pericope in which this verse is inserted is Isa 49:7–13. The text corresponds to two exegetical comments to the canticle of the servant of Yhwh in Isa 49:1–6. The first exegetical 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.

67 Cf. CHILDS, *Isaiah*, 386.

68 Cf. BLENKINSOPP, *Isaiah 40–55*, 349; Childs, *Isaiah*, 386.

69 Cf. ACKROYD, «The Book of Isaiah», 360.

70 «Thus says Yhwh: At the time of my favor 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» (Isa 49:8 NJB)

pose. 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 בְּנוֹ 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 בְּנוֹ 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 nature⁷¹.

2.3. Understanding 'āman (אָמַן) in hifil through its qal meaning

The causative conjugation called hifil⁷² predominates in the Wortfeld of the root אָמַן. 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 אָמַן 45 times, out of the 52 presences in the MT, with the verb πιστεύω - πιστεύειν, and 5 times with the verb ἐμπιστεύω⁷³. The hifil of אָמַן implies the

71 Cf. JEPSEN, «אָמַן», *TDOT* I, 295; L. ALONSO SCHÖCKEL – J. L. SICRE DÍAZ, «Jeremías», in *Profetas. Comentario*, Madrid: Cristiandad, 1987, I, 604. 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 oath pretends to convince Jeremiah that the people's intention is sincere. See JACK LUNDBOM, *Jeremiah 37–52. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. The Anchor Bible 21C, New York: Doubleday, 2004, 128–129.131.

72 Cf. JOÜON – MURAOKA, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, I, n. 54a.

73 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 Kings 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 אָמַן. The Greek translation already filters through the Western experience and culture 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 (1 Sam 27:12). However the semantic ramifications connected and discovered by a reader are not enough for the Greek

semantic idea of «to say amen with conviction to all its implied existential consequences»⁷⁴. 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, i.e., they are true since there is no doubt that they do 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 infallible⁷⁵. But is it possible to discover the basic meaning of qal in the theological connotation of אָמַן in hifil? My proposal continues to be positive. regarding thi query, Walther Eichrodt presents a significant observation. The author states that the hifil אָמַן אֱלֹהֵינוּ 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 'mn in Arabic is to be secure, out of danger, one could choose as the preferable translation of the Hebrew *he'emin*, to regard as assured, to find security in».⁷⁶ 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. 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 אָמַן in hifil is very significant, since it appears a total of 5 times in 9 verses, i.e., 4:1 (אָמַן אֱלֹהֵינוּ), 4:5 (אָמַן אֱלֹהֵינוּ), 4:8 (אָמַן אֱלֹהֵינוּ) y 4:9 (אָמַן אֱלֹהֵינוּ). The verb that traditionally is translated 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 proven his appointment through visible signs.

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 RUDOLF BULTMANN, «πιστεύω», *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* VI, 175–182.

74 Cf. WEISER, «πιστεύω», *TDNT* VI, 186; JEPSEN, «אָמַן», *TDOT* I, 300.

75 Cf. WILDBERGER, «אָמַן», *TLOT* I, 142.

76 EICHRODT, *Theology of the Old Testament*, II, 276. See also JEPSEN, «אָמַן», 298.

The *semeia* communicate a phenomenological dimension that leads Israel to the cognition and conviction that Yhwh is acting through his leader, Moses⁷⁷.

The usage of הִאֲמִין (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., 1 Sam 27:12 (וַיֵּאֱמָן); Prov 26:25 (אֶל־תִּאֲמָן־בּוֹ); Job 4:18 (וַיֵּאֱמָן). 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 אָמֵן. 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 following passages are significant because they illustrate this connotation:

Exod 14:31: «When Israel saw the mighty deed that Yhwh had performed against the Egyptians, the people revered Yahweh and put their faith (וַיֵּאֱמָנוּ) in Yhwh and in Moses, his servant»⁷⁸.

Exod 19:9: «Yhwh then said to Moses, 'Look, I shall come to you in a dense cloud so that the people will hear when I speak to you and believe you (וַיֵּאֱמָנוּ) ever after'»⁷⁹.

The reader must observe that the action of believing is certified with the visible deeds (*semeia*) through the events described in the narrative of Exodus⁸⁰. What is the meaning of this? In the transformational process of the strengthening faith of Israel, the wonderful deeds of Yhwh are the fundamental steps that prove or confirm his divine existence. This simple conception is crucial in the

77 Cf. JOHN DURHAM, *Exodus*. Word Biblical Commentary. Vol. 3, Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987, 44–46.

78 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.

79 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.

80 The only source of salvation is Yhwh and Israel has seen it (וַיֵּרֶא): Exod 14:31. See Durham, *Exodus*, 197.

theological thinking of the human author of the sacred texts. The OT 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. The faith, that is the result of 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. For this reason, God is genuine, true, and undisputable in the theological Israelite mindset. Therefore faith is a kind of cognition or knowledge that comes out of the result of a personal experience of God who interacts with his own people in the field of human history. This assertion indicates that faith is a *scientia Dei*, but one may ask, what kind of knowledge? The Old Testament does not describe the notion of faith according to epistemological or intellectual definitions of the Western philosophical mindset. Faith, in the first testament, is not describing an abstract notion, but a concrete understanding 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 children⁸¹. The liberation from Egypt, for example, is a concrete proof of the firmness and veracity of Yhwh. Each act of divine salvation in the OT offers a corroboration of the infallibility of Yhwh.

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 mitzvot of the covenant. The Israelite behavioral pattern demonstrates an essential skepticism to the divine providence, manifesting itself in sharp contrast with God's faithful deeds⁸². 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

81 See 2 Chron 20:20: «Trust (אָמַן) in the Lord, and you shall be free!»

82 See Deut 9:23: «you rebelled against the command of Yāhweh your God and would not believe him (לֹא אָמַןְתָּ) or listen to his voice (לֹא שָׁמַעְתָּ בְּקוֹלֵי)» (NJB); Deut 1:32 «But for all this, you put no faith (אָמַןְתָּ) in Yāhweh your God» (NJB); Psalm 78:22 «because they had no faith in God (אָמַןְתָּ), no trust (בָּטַחְתָּ) in his power to save» (NJB).

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 experience 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.

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 (יִשְׁׁרָף), meaning «to have faith or to believe» which is the typical connotation of יִשְׁׁרָף in hifil⁸³. 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.⁸⁴ For this reason the faith in the OT 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 יִשְׁׁרָף consequently embraces a complex personal attitude that implies the fear of the Lord as meaning that he certainly exists and he is true to his nature (cf. 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.

According to the point of view expressed in the prophet Isaiah, during the Syro-Ephramite war, the faith placed on Yhwh is the only deed that can give certainty and protection: «Therefore thus says the Lord God, 'Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested

83 VON RAD, *Genesis*, 184–185.

84 VON RAD, *Teologia dell' Antico Testamento*, I, 203.

stone, a costly cornerstone for the foundation, firmly placed. He who believes (תִּמְאַמֵּן) in it will not be disturbed» (Isa. 28:16)⁸⁵. It is significant to emphasize the imagery of the solid and firm rock that has been put to the test through time⁸⁶. 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 through into the present time with an implicit eschatological dimension⁸⁷.

On the other hand, Isaiah also emphasizes the *failure* that resides in the trust (faith) that Israel placed on powerful nations, like Egypt. The result of this kind of faith is desolation and destruction: «The head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is the son of Remaliah. If you will not take your stand on me you will not stand firm (לֹא תִצְמָחוּ כִּי לֹא תִצְמָחוּ)» (Isa 7:9)⁸⁸. The verse condenses the double dimension of the Hebrew faith's problem: in whom shall they put their trust? The answer is evident. Only Yhwh must be the object of the Israelite faith. Even from a pragmatic point of view, it should be convenient for Israel to trust only in Yhwh, since each time that this happens the results are positive because of who is the guarantor of the help and the protection given. But Israel often is seduced by the attractive political and religious practices of other nations, leading the people to forget Yhwh by putting their faith in foreign idols and securities that subsequently lead to the inevitable vacuity and destruction, precisely because they lack the existential

85 NASB: The New American Standard Bible (1995).

86 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. The Targum interprets Isa 28:16 under the hermeneutical key of the messianic and monarchical view. See WILDBERGER, *Isaiah 28–39*, 40–41.

87 Cf. OTTO KAISER, *Der Prophet Jesaja Kapitel 13–19*. Das Alte Testament Deutsch, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983, 201.

88 The pericope of Isa 7:4–9 proclaims an oracle of salvation. Verse 9 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*, 289–291.

qualities of אָמַן. The foreign powers cannot provide the parental security and protection needed in the moments of affliction. The destruction of the Northern kingdom in the year 722 by the Assyrians (see 2 Kings 17) is a «historical proof» of this double dimension of faith. The destruction is the consequence of trusting in political and military forces that never really cared for the well-being of Israel and, therefore, were untrustworthy (2 Kings 17:7–13). It is worth noting that the Masoretic expression לֹא תִאֶמְנֶנּוּ כִּי לֹא תִאֶמְנֶנּוּ (Isa 7:9) employs the verb אָמַן twice. The repetition in the English translations is not as evident as it is in the Masoretic text. The modern versions portray the manifold possible meanings of the same term that can be translated as to trust, to stand firm, to take a stand, among others⁸⁹. What is expressed in the multiple renderings of the hifil of אָמַן is not only the cognitive information but also the personal attitude that requires the permanency of character to accept with conviction that Yhwh's utterances are true.

The experience of faith in Yhwh brings about as a consequence the salvation from a situation of danger or death. Trust in Yhwh always produces salvation. Yet when Israel put their faith in different idols and powers, they experience the negative dimensions of death and desolation. This double connotation marks the dramatic parental relationship between Israel and Yhwh. Israel's twisted relationship of faith caused by idolatry ultimately produced the subsequent loss of freedom, land, and life. The tension between apostasy and fidelity embraces the real drama of Israel within the narratives of the book of Judges and the two books of Kings. Illustrative examples among the sacred books. The great destruction of the Israelite people is the consequence of the abandonment of Yhwh because of their continuous search of securities in other entities that were not Yhwh⁹⁰.

In the clauses expressed in the book of Psalms the reader may find examples of a personal relationship portrayed in diverse

89 Examples of Isaiah 7:9: NAB: «Unless your faith is firm, you shall not be firm!». NAS: «If you will not believe, you surely shall not last». GNV: «If ye beleeeue not, surely ye shall not be established». JPS: «If ye will not have faith, surely ye shall not be established». KJV: «If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established». VUL (Vulgata, 1983): «si non credideritis non permanebitis». For a summary of the problem of the critical textus of Isa 7:9, see WILDBERGER, *Isaiah 1–12*, 285.

90 Cf. VON RAD, *Teologia dell' Antico Testamento*, 372–378. 379–386. See the illustrative examples of Ps 78:22 (אָמַן) and Ps 78:32 (אָמַן).

aspects through the personal and collective experiences of trust and faith in a narrative context of persecution, betrayal, suffering produced by an unjust cause, and praise originated by the greatness and goodness of Yhwh. Among these contextual diversities, the Psalms present magnificent phenomenological expressions of faith that are so practical and realistic that the psalmist 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 that affirms: «This I believe (אָמַן אֶפְתָּח): 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 moment⁹¹.

3. VOCABULARY DERIVED FROM THE ROOT אָמַן THROUGH QAL'S SEMANTIC STRATUM

Until now I have accentuated the verbal notions of the root אָמַן, but it is significant to also highlight briefly some substantive and adjectival forms of the aforementioned Wortfeld, like for example, ā'mēn, ē'met, ē'mūnāh, 'ōmen, etc⁹².

3.1. The lemma 'āmēn (אָמֵן)

The adjectival participle אָמֵן derives from the root אָמַן and usually it can be used as an adverb⁹³. The אָמֵן appears often in the Old

91 Cf. BENITO MARCONCINI, «Fe», in *Nuevo Diccionario de Teología Bíblica*, ed. P. Rossano, Madrid: Paulinas, 1990, 653–654.

92 The most common derivatives of the studied root are ē'met, 'amint, ē'mūnāh, ē'mūn, ē'mūnīm, ē'mūnē, 'ōmen, 'omnāh, 'omnām, 'umnām. See Jepsen, «אָמַן», *TDNT I*, 293. For the list of diverse terms equivalent to אָמַן present in the Septuagint (LXX), see Wildberger, «אָמַן», *TLOT I*, 146.

93 Cf. BROWN – DRIVER – BRIGGS, «אָמַן», 53.

Testament with the function of introducing an oath that must be fulfilled⁹⁴. This semantic dimension implies the acceptance and confirmation of the fulfillment of an order that must be obeyed because it is coming from a superior or the king himself. One can appreciate this meaning in the following illustrative citation: «May this water of cursing entering your bowels, make your belly swell and your sexual organs shrivel! To which the woman will reply: Amen! (אָמֵן) Amen! (אָמֵן)» (Num 5:22). The repetition of אָמֵן emphasizes the absolute certainty of the acceptance of the received order because it has been assimilated as a true fact, therefore there is no doubt that the utterance would be fulfilled in a positive or negative manner⁹⁵. The same semantic connotation is ratified in Jeremiah. The prophet ratifies the certain promise of Yhwh with the assertion of אָמֵן: «so that I may fulfill the oath I swore to your ancestors, that I may give them a country flowing with milk and honey, as is the case today. I replied: So be it (אָמֵן), Yhwh!» (Jer 11:5)⁹⁶.

In the Deuteronomistic history, the sacred author concludes each of the 12 courses (see Deut 27:15–26)⁹⁷ with a complete acceptance and understanding of the people who answers assertively proclaiming אָמֵן, as an indication of comprehension and conviction

94 Cf. SHEMARYAHU TALMON, «Amen as an Introductory Oath Formula», *Textus* 7 (1969) 124–129.

95 The pericope of Num 5:19–20 functions as the protasis of the narrative structure of the chapter. Verse 19 states a protasis that contains the negative alternative in the case of a woman's infidelity. Verse 20, proposes the positive alternative of the protasis. Verses 21–22 present the apodosis of the case established in verses 19–20. Therefore, the use of the unusual double 'āmēn in this kind of formulae (see Deut 27:15–26 where 'āmēn is pronounced once) is due to the binary formulation of the protasis. This means that the woman, in front of the double alternative, states her 'āmēn for each alternative established in the apodosis of verse 22. The Sifre Bamidbar explains this literary phenomenon of the double 'āmēn: «'āmēn, that I did not defile myself; and if I did in fact defile myself, may the water enter me» (Sifre, 5b, Nōśā, par. 15) in BARUCH LEVINE, *Number 1–20. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Anchor Bible 4, New York: Doubleday, 1993, 198.

96 The curses expressed in Jer 11:1–5 present a close literary and semantic relation with the curses of Deut 27:15–26. The verses of Jer 11:3–5 present the same vocabulary found in Deut 27:15 and expressing the same semantic field of Deut 27:26. In the curses of Deut 27:15–26 the people state the acceptance of the consequences of the curses in 'āmēn, while in Jer 11:1–5 is the prophet who declares the acceptance of the consequences of the curses on behalf of the people. See JACK LUNDBOM, *Jeremiah 1–20. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Anchor Bible 21A, New York: Doubleday, 1999, 621.

97 The twelve curses have the literary characteristic of showing the repetition of the participle אָרַר which is the passive qal of the verb אָרַר (to curse) as the introductory word of each proclamation. See the beginning of each verse in Deut 27:15–26.

of whatever was said is true or it will come to be⁹⁸. The one who answers with אָמַן in the context of curses acknowledges and accepts the stipulated implications, meaning the acceptance of the responsibility of a crime or condemnation. But if the person is innocent the pronunciation of «amen» assumes an apotropaic character⁹⁹. The formula that implies the affirmation with אָמַן establishes that Israel, because of the special covenantal relationship with Yhwh, radically separates itself from the behavior that implies crimes difficult to discover. Consequently the oath asserted with אָמַן protects the community from an individual or communal crime. Therefore the אָמַן has a bonding character. This means that if the authorities of the people cannot know or discover a crime, this cannot remain immune because Yhwh is the personal guarantor and custodian of the assumed responsibilities and consequences implied in the utterance of אָמַן.¹⁰⁰ In this line of thought, the text of Nehemiah is significant because it expresses this schema of utterance and fulfillment embraced in the אָמַן affirmation of the faithful assembly (לְקָהֵל) of God: «Then, shaking out the fold of my garment, I said, 'May God thus shake out of house and possessions anyone who does not make good this promise; may he be shaken out thus and left empty!' And the whole assembly answered, 'Amen' (אָמֵן) and praised Yahweh. And the people kept this promise» (Neh 5:13).

As a précis of the semantic field of אָמַן, the term embraces two basic connotations: *acknowledgment* and *acceptance* of a given order or proclamation. This double semantic connotation implies also a personal *cognitive process* of understanding and believing whatever has been proclaimed is true because it is coming from a reliable source which is God or somebody who speaks on his behalf. This cognitive aspect is accompanied by an *existential agreement* that whatever was understood—order, commandment, utterance— is believed to be certain and righteous, and for this reason it must be fulfilled¹⁰¹.

98 In the pericope of Deut 27:15–26, each proclamation begins with אָרַר and finishes with אָמַן.

99 Cf. JOHANNES HEMPEL, *Apoxyismata. Vorarbeiten zu einer Religionsgeschichte und Theologie des Alten Testaments*, BZWA 81, Berlin: A. Töpelmann, 1961, 103; WILDBERGER, «אָמַן», *TLOT I*, 146–147.

100 Cf. NELSON, *Deuteronomy*, 319–321.

101 Cf. WEISER, «πιστεύω», *TDNT VI*, 186.

3.2. The lemma *'emûnah* (אֱמוּנָה)

Another term also worth mentioning is the noun אֱמוּנָה that often is translated in English with the equivalent terms of honesty, certainty, security, firmness, and faithfulness as one can appreciate in the following pericopes: Prov 12:22; 28:20; Exod 17:12; Isa 33:6; Ps 37:3; Jer 5:3; 7:28; 9:2; 2 Kings 12:16¹⁰².

It is not unusual to see the application of this term in the anthropological context of finances because the transactions of money require which are conveyed by the term אֱמוּנָה. In the biblical contexts honesty, sincerity, and faithfulness are *conditiones sine qua non* in matters of payment and administration: «No accounts were kept with the men to whom the money was paid over to be spent on the workmen, since they were honest (בְּאֵמֻנָה) in their work» (2 Kings 12:16; 22:7; 2 Chron 31:18)¹⁰³.

The notion of אֱמוּנָה when it is applied to a theological context, describes the faithful attitude of a person who has absolute trust in Yhwh: «Put your trust (בְּטוֹחַ) in Yhwh and do right, make your home in the land and live secure (אֱמוּנָה)» (Ps 37:3). According to this hermeneutic line the Babylonian Talmud in its tractate Makkot 23b–24a proposes an interesting synthesis that portrays the semantic and theological nucleus of the Hebrew term. In the Hebrew tradition, as it is already indicated in the Talmud, according to the teachings of Rabbi Simlai there are 613 mitzvot established by Yhwh in the time of Moses. These commandments are the platform upon which is built a righteous relationship with Yhwh. The Psalm 15:1–5 reduces these precepts to eleven. The prophet Isaiah summarizes them to six (Isa 33:15–16). The prophet Micah condenses them to three (Mic 6:8). Subsequently Isaiah again summarizes them to two (Isa 56,1). The prophet Amos consequently summarizes all the mitzvot into one (Amos 5:4). But it is the prophet Habakkuk who establishes the only one precept (mitzvah) that is fundamental in order to enter and remain in the divine relationship with Yhwh: «You see, anyone whose heart is not upright will succumb, but the upright will live through faithfulness (בְּאֵמֻנָתוֹ)» (Hab 2:4). The righteous person lives

102 Cf. WILDBERGER, «אמן», *TLOT I*, 147–148.

103 Cf. GESENIUS, «אֱמוּנָה», 58; XABIER PIKAZA, «Fe», in *Diccionario de la Biblia. Historia y Palabra*, Estella: Verbo Divino, 2008, 383.

his/her relationship with Yhwh based on his/her ¹⁰⁴אָמַן. Following this line of thought, the Talmudic interpretation implies that the only condition to keep one faithful to the Torah and to enter into a stable and upright relationship with Yhwh is the אָמַן that reflects an everyday relationship. Such dimensions of a loving and faithful relationship can be understood by ways of analogy in a context of the family. This means that the semantic field of the root אָמַן expressed in qal continues to be the basic semantic substratum of the term. The fulfillment of the Torah, then, can be summarized under this dimension in which Israel perceived himself as a son who trust faithfully in his father/mother—Yhwh—who constantly protects and gives life to him.

3.3. The lemma 'ēmet (אֱמֶת)

An important lemma in the semantic Wortfeld is the noun אֱמֶת. Traditionally it is rendered in the English translations as truth. However the word is richer than just the definition aforementioned because it implies the notion of firmness, faithfulness, loyalty, authenticity, among others. The noun אֱמֶת, being a derived form of the verb אָמַן is intrinsically related with the lexemes ā'mēn and ē'menet (אָמַן / אֱמֶת). In Genesis 24:48 the term acquires the double meanings of security and stability that one may expect through a journey; in Proverbs 11:10 expresses the secure reward for somebody who is upright before the Lord while the wicked person will perish because of his/her iniquities; in Joshua 2:12 and Jeremiah 2:21 the term signifies a secure promise that it would be fulfilled. The text of Nehemiah 7:2 uses the term with the meaning of fidelity and trustworthiness to describe a believer. This same theological conception implied in the term אֱמֶת also appears in the pericopes of Exod 18:21; 1 Kings 2:4; 3:6; 2 Kings 20:3; Isa 38:3; 1 Sam 12:24; Ps 25:5; 26:3; 86:11; Zech 8:3.

The rich semantic spectrum condensed in the noun אֱמֶת is utilized by the sacred authors to indicate essential attributes of Yhwh. The divine nature of God has as its ontological essence the notion

104 Makkot 23b–24a. See also SHIMON BAKON, «Habakkuk: From Perplexity to Faith», *Jewish Biblical Quarterly* 39 (2011): 25–30.

of truth and faithfulness. These ontological characteristics of Yhwh give guarantees to everyone who enters into a relationship with God that he would not abandon or betray them because that would be against his own ontological nature¹⁰⁵. The fidelity of God is an expression of his love and care for his children. When the biblical authors glorify and praise the Lord, they presuppose the basic domestic relationship with the God of Israel who behaves as a careful and dedicated parent: «Though my father and mother forsake me, Yahweh will gather me up» (Ps 27:10).

3.4. *Other lexemes associated to the Wortfeld of אמן*

In the Old Testament there is a rich vocabulary in which one may find different terms that imply and signify the notion of trust, faithfulness, reliability, and faith in God¹⁰⁶. Among these terms there are two important lemmas worth mentioning: *bataḥ* (הַטָּח)¹⁰⁷ which generally is translated as «to trust»¹⁰⁸ and *ḥasah* (הָסָה) that often the English versions render with the verb «to take refuge or to seek refuge»¹⁰⁹, indicating the real or figurative search for protection and security in an individual (Ps 64:11; Isa 57:13) or communal (Ps 2:12; 5:12; 17:7; 18:31) experience of life¹¹⁰.

105 See Isa 38:18–19; 61:8; Mic 7:20; Ezek 18:9; Neh 9:33; Gen 32:11; 2 Sam 2:6; Exod 34:6; Ps 71:22; 54:5; 86:15. See BROWN – DRIVER – BRIGGS, «תָּחַן», 54.

106 The proper terms of this Wortfeld are *ḏ'men* (Isa 25:1), *'omnām*, *'umnām*, *'omnā*, *'amānā* (Neh 10:1; 11:23), *ā'môn* (2 Kings 21:18–19), *ā'mī* (Neh 7:59; Ezra 2:57). See WILDBERGER, «אָמַן», *TLOT I*, 135.

107 It appears 57 times with a religious meaning. It has 37 presences in the Psalms. See WILDBERGER, «אָמַן», *TLOT I*, 143.

108 To trust in God: 2 Kings 18:5; 19:10; 1 Chron 5:20; Ps 9:11; 21:8; 22:5.6; 25:2; 26:1; 28:7; 32:10; 37:3; 40:4; 55:24; 56:5; 56:12; 62:9. To trust in a man: Judg 9:26; Ps 41:10; 118:8.9; 146:3; Prov 31:11; Jer 17:5; 46:25; Mic 7:5. See BROWN – DRIVER – BRIGGS, «בָּטַח», 105.

109 Cf. BROWN – DRIVER – BRIGGS, «הָסָה», 340. As illustrative examples see also Ps 64:11; 57:2; 7:2; 37:40.

110 Cf. MARCONCINI, «Fe», 654. This essay does not pretend to be exhaustive in the presentation of all the lexemes related to the semantic field of believing or to believe. I have shown only a brief semantic review of the Hebrew root אָמַן manifested in its most important verbal and substantive forms with the purpose of rediscovering the semantic value of the *qal* conjugation of the verb אָמַן that has been marginalized or omitted in the aforementioned philological and theological articles.

4. THE FAITH OF ISRAEL: SEMANTIC CONCLUSIONS

In the first testament, אָמַן when used in connection to God, embraces the vital and personal notions of knowledge, understanding, acceptance, spiritual and psychological attitudes that lead a person to trust and believe in Yhwh. Among these semantic facets, the conception of אָמַן in qal conjugation is exclusively circumscribed in a parental and familial semantic context but at the same time is the primordial platform of meaning upon which the other conjugations and derived lemmas express their various meanings¹¹¹. 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:

a) *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 OT.

b) *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 level of protection increases according to the intensity of the personal relationship. It is a semantic notion derived from the family relationship (a). 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.

c) *Attitude of nourishment*: it is motivated by the proper love and care of the parents. The ones responsible for raising children

111 See 2 Sam 4:4; Ruth 4:16; Num 11:2; 2 Kings 10:1.5; Esther 2:7.

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 (a). The same notion is applied to the theological dimension of faith in OT as it is illustrated in the Exodus, Numbers, Psalms, Deutero and Trito Isaiah.

d) *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.

e) *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 (a) and the attitude of protection (b) embraced in the meaning of יָגַל (qal).

f) *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 and the prophets 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. The episode of a young David illustrates this historical and theological conception of «trust» and «faith» based upon the experiences of «protection»: 1 Sam 17:34-37¹².

112 Cf. HANS W. HERTZBERG, *I and II Samuel*. The Old Testament Library. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964, 151–152; DAVID TSUMURA, *The First Book of Samuel*. Grand Rapids, MI – Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2007, 72.

From a diachronic standpoint, the basic semantic notion of the root אָמַן 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-exile, namely, from the Babylonian and Persian periods¹¹³. However, some of these texts may reflect a material or tradition that can be placed between the 8th and 7th century BCE¹¹⁴. 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 the basic human experience of parental care and protection is used in the root אָמַן 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-exile¹¹⁵. It is significant the text of Jer 42:5 (וַיְהִי־הָיָה בְּנֵי לְעֵד אֲמָתַי וְנְאֻמָּוּן), because its material began to be collected between the seventh and the sixth centuries BCE, thus the ontological notion of אָמַן 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 period¹¹⁶. 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 basic meaning is embodied, this means that it is grounded in the vital human experience

113 Isa 49, 14–26; Esther 2,7; Ruth 4,16; Num 11,12; 2 Kgs 10,1.5.

114 See the references of Num 11,2 and 2Kgs 10,1.5.

115 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.

116 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. See GUY COUTURIER, «Jeremiah», in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, edited by Raymond Brown, Joseph Fitzmyer, and Roland Murphy, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1990, 265–304, esp. 268; CAROLYN SHARP, *Prophecy and Ideology in Jeremiah: Struggles for Authority in the Deutero-Jeremianic Prose*. London, UK – New York, US; T&T Clark, 2003, 1–7.

of bodily existence¹¹⁷. The notions of parental care, protection, and nurture are the most basic bodily experiences that any human being had 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 Israel¹¹⁸. The basic meaning of *qal* remains as the substantial human experience that gives rise to a wide variety of abstract and theological connotations that serve as grammatical expressions of an experience of faith and connection with God¹¹⁹.

These «semantic lines» give a broader significance to the notions of security, trust, fidelity, and truth expressed in the *nifal* and *hifil* of *נָחַם* 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 *נָחַם* derive, making more evident in this manner 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 love of God manifested in the Psalms, the *nevi'im*, and the expressions of faith of Jesus with his Father in the writings of the NT¹²⁰.

117 Cf. JANDA, «Cognitive Linguistics in the year 2015», 134–135; TECUMSEH FITCH, *The Evolution of Language*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010, 122–125; GEORGE LAKOFF – MARK JOHNSON, *Metaphors We live by*, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1980, 3–6.

118 JANDA, «Cognitive Linguistics in the year 2015», 140–141.

119 LAKOFF – JOHNSON, *Metaphors We live by*, 25–26; JOAN BYBEE – REVERE PERKINS – WILLIAM PAGLIUCA, *The Evolution of Grammar, Tense, Aspect, and Modality in the Languages of the World*. Chicago, USA – London, UK: Chicago University Press, 1994, 15–17.

120 See Hosea 11,1–9 and Ps 72,19–22.

ABSTRACT

The study presents a philological and semantic essay of the verb 'āman in order to vindicate the semantic Wortfeld of its qal conjugation. The philological studies of Moberly and Wildberger omit the analysis of this conjugation because they consider it insignificant and without any semantic value. The predominant academic positions base their studies on the nifal and hifil forms as the basic semantic platform that permeates all the grammatical forms of 'āman. This essay proposes a differing opinion. The qal form is the basic and original semantic substratum that permeates all the grammatical forms of the root 'mn.

Key words: 'āman, qal, protection, parents, family, paidagogos, hifil, nifal.

RESUMEN

El estudio presenta un ensayo filológico y semántico de la raíz hebrea 'mn para reivindicar el valor de la conjugación qal del verbo 'āman. Los estudios filológicos de Moberly y Wildberger omiten el análisis de las formas qal del verbo, por considerarlas insignificantes en cuanto a su valor semántico. Las posiciones académicas predominantes basan sus análisis en las formas nifal y hifil del verbo, como las plataformas primigenias de significado que permean todas las formas gramaticales de la raíz. Este ensayo propone una línea contraria. La forma qal es el substrato semántico esencial que permea todas las formas gramaticales de 'mn.

Palabras claves: 'āman, qal, hifil, nifal, 'āmēn, protección, confiar, creer, fidelidad.