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THE CHALLENGE OF BETTER UNDERSTANDING
DISCOURSE PARTICLES: THE CASE OF לָכֵן

ABSTRACT
This study establishes that knowing the meaning of a discourse particle (=DP) entails much more than determining its possible translation values. Insights into the complexity of language and how linguistic meaning works provide some foundational parameters for the investigation of לָכֵן. For example, DPs may have a semantic core, which in the case of לָכֵן is “that being so”. Since lexical items are part of language as a complex and dynamic system, their meaning may shift in time, but the semantic core of a DP may also remain part of its semantic potential. On the basis of the contextual frames within which לָכֵן is used, three main categories of use are identified: (1) לָכֵן in argumentative prophetic announcements (prototypical); (2) לָכֵן in argumentative dialogues (seldom); and (3) לָכֵן in “fact reporting” statements (seldom). No “emphasising” or “adversative” sense for the DP could be distinguished.

1. INTRODUCTION
In Biblical Hebrew there are a number of “small” words which have through the ages posed a challenge for interpreters of the ancient language, e.g. את, עַל־כֵן, לָכֵן, לְמַעַן and רַק. As a rule it has not been difficult to find a description and/or translation equivalent for their prototypical uses. However, those cases where the typical translation equivalents do not seem to work well tend to raise the question of whether we fully understand these expressions. Furthermore, how do those differ that seem to have the same translation value, for example, את and עַל־כֵן?

1 The financial assistance of the National Research Foundation (NRF) of South Africa towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed in this publication and the conclusions arrived at are those of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to the NRF. Furthermore, I want to thank Dr Alex Andrason and Mr Ettienne Ellis for their critical remarks on a final draft of the paper. The paper also benefitted much from many of the remarks of three anonymous reviewers. However, all the shortcomings and contestable views are the sole responsibility of the author.
The essence of the problem is evident when one considers the way in which, for example, לָכֵּן, is rendered by major translations of the Bible. The most frequent use of the about 200 occurrences of לָכֵּן is to introduce a threat y (#1), and sometimes a promise y (#2) of God in the light of events or circumstances x. In the majority of the cases לָכֵּן is translated as “therefore” or its equivalent.

12 They have denied [what] Yahweh [says]…
14 Therefore thus says Yahweh the God of hosts … (Jer 5:12, 14).

When one compares instances such as #3, where it may be argued that “therefore” does not fit the context very well, some translations still stick to “therefore’ (NRSV). Many others, however, offer translation options which seem to display diverging interpretations of לָכֵּן.

13 Therefore I will hurl you out of this land into a land that neither you nor your ancestors have known, and there you shall serve other gods day and night, for I will show you no favor.
14 Therefore, the days are surely coming, says the Lord, when it shall no longer be said, “As the Lord lives who brought the people of Israel up out of the land of Egypt” … (Jer. 16:13-14).
So I will throw you out of this land into a land that neither you nor your ancestors have ever known. There you must worship other gods day and night, for I will show you no mercy”.

Yet I, the Lord, say: “A new time will certainly come. People now affirm their oaths with ‘I swear as surely as the Lord lives who delivered the people of Israel out of Egypt’” …

Therefore I will hurl you out of this land to a land that neither you nor your fathers have known, and there you will serve other gods, day and night; for I will show you no mercy.

Assuredly, a time is coming – declares the Lord – when it shall no more be said, “As the Lord lives who brought the Israelites out of the land of Egypt” …

Daarom zal ik jullie wegwerpen: ik verdrijf jullie naar een land dat jullie niet kennen en dat ook jullie voorouders niet hebben gekend. Daar zullen jullie andere goden dienen, dag en nacht, en ik zal geen medelijden met jullie hebben.

Ø De dag zal komen – spreekt de HEER – dat er niet meer wordt gezegd: “Zo waar de HEER leeft, die het volk van Israël uit Egypte heeft bevrijd” …

If one considers the scholarly literature on לָכֵן, it seems that exegetes and translators have been relying on BH lexica and grammars at their disposal. For example, HALOT (1999:530) distinguishes three meanings:

1. “therefore” (when it occurs before a threat of punishment, in contrast to עַל־כֵּן);
2. “In return for”; and
3. “assuredly”

Clines et al. (1998) distinguish two categories by means of two clusters of possible translation values, without any indication of the categorical status or grounds of their distinction:
1. “therefore, thus so, in that case, now then, granted” and
2. “surely, assuredly”\(^2\)

According to BDB’s treatment of לָכֵן (1906:487), it is evident that they are of the opinion that it has only one meaning. They paraphrase it as follows: “according to such conditions, that being so, therefore … especially in proph. where it often introduces, after statement of the grounds, a divine declaration or command”. \(^3\) As “special usages” they identify the following:

“(a) idiom., in conversation, in reply to an objection, to state the ground upon which the answer is made; Gn 4:15 therefore – this being so …

(b) inferring the cause from the effect, or developing what is logically involved in a statement, Is 26:14b … therefore thou hast visited and destroyed them (not a consequence of v a ‘the dead rise not,’ but the development of what is implicit in it”.

In contrast to HALOT and Clines et al., BDB does not distinguish the label “assuredly”. Only one core semantic value is postulated. The other “apparent” meanings are uses that could be attributed to the use of לָכֵן in those special contexts – without losing its core semantic value. This line of thought is also adopted by Jenni (2000:283), who argues that לָכֵן must be understood from the perspective its morphological components

\(^2\) Jenni (2000:282-283) provides convincing arguments why a view proposed by Maag (1953) – that כֵּן should not be related to the deictic meaning of the lexeme, but a homonym which can be translated as “correct, right”, and which gives לָכֵן the sense of “indeed” – should be rejected. This proposal by Maag, which mirrors a hypothesis formulated by Casanovicz (1910:343), is indeed hard to defend (see also Muraoka 1985). The same could be said of the distinction made in HALOT (1999:532) which, this time with reference to the so-called emphatic lamed, assigns לָכֵן the sense of “assuredly”. A more radical view by Goldbaum (1964) – that לָכֵן is not a connective but a quasi-adverb that introduces vows (to be translated “upon my word”) – did not find much acceptance (see also the critique of Jenni 2000:283-284).

\(^3\) Concerning עַל־כֵּן, BDB (1906:487) asserts in line with HALOT (1999:532), “upon ground of such conditions, therefore (introducing, more generally than לָכֵן, the statement of a fact, rather than a declaration: never used in the phrases noted under לָכֵן)”.

provide, viz. “ל = as far as” + “כֵּן = thus, as just been told”, in other words, “under these circumstances”. 4 The logical relationship between the contents \( x \) and \( y \) that are related in this way is typically causal, predominantly where God makes a threatening declaration (“drohende Gottesrede”), but also where God makes a promise (“verheissende Gottesrede”). However, the logical relationship may also concern a causal linking in a human dialogue (“kausale Anknüpfung in Rede van Menschen”), namely an adversative, restrictive, concessive, consecutive, conditional or explicative link by a narrator or speaker (Jenni 2000:284-286). Jenni (2000:283) observes that לָכֵן has a subjective nuance “mit der die fast ausschliesslich Verwendung als rhetorisch-stilistisches Mittel in der Rede zusammenhängt”. 5

If we consider how לָכֵן has been treated by BH scholars and how it is sometimes translated (see again #3), it is understandable why Bazzanella (2006:452) observes that when translating discourse particles “where ‘a substantial amount of inferencing over and above their decoding’ (Ariel 1998:250) is required, there are two main risks – over- and under-determination”. The crux of the problem revolves around two questions:

(1) Does לָכֵן have one core semantic value as, for example, BDB (1906) and Jenni (2000) assert, or more than one meaning, as, for example, HALOT (1999:532) and Clines et al. (1998) imply?

(2) If and how could the conventionalised pragmatic dimensions of לָכֵן be described and categorised?

It is hypothesised in this study that the wealth of modern linguistic studies of discourse particles and markers 6 provides the key to answering these questions.

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4 Jenni (2000:283) puts it as follows: “Die adäquate Übersetzung von ‘in bezug auf so’, wobei ‘so’ als anaphorische Pro-form für einem Satz/Sachverhalt gilt, is dann etwa ‘unter diesen Umständen’.

5 In line with Muilenburg’s (1961; 1969) view on Hebrew particles, March (1974) investigates the rhetorical functions of לָכֵן, and its meaning. He distinguishes between לָכֵן as a (1) causal conjunction; (2) attention getter; and (3) conversation director. However, the categorical status of these rhetorical categories is not clear. For example, do they constitute a polysemous set or are they just different uses of the same semantic (that is, connecting) value of לָכֵן, that operates at different linguistic levels?

6 Nemo (2006:375) states that the study of discourse particles “since the late sixties has become the cradle of contemporary linguistic semantics, and a
two questions. Although we focus in this study on לָכֵן, the ultimate goal is to lay a foundation that could be used in the analysis and description of the other discourse particles in Biblical Hebrew.

For these purposes, this study is organised as follows: after pointing out some of the challenges that face grammarians of BH, we commence with postulating our view of language and human communication as well our view of discourse markers that we have adopted from, for example, Fischer (2006). Secondly, we postulate: (a) a model of how discourse particles (=DPs) that occur in written texts work; and (b) how the different meanings they appear to have need to be understood. In the light of this model, a possible procedure for analysing DPs is formulated as a working hypothesis. This working hypothesis is then used to describe לָכֵן. In conclusion, the insights gained through this study are summarised.

2. WORKING MODEL

2.1. Model of language and communication

Analysing and describing DPs are primarily determined by a researcher’s views of how communication, language and linguistic meaning work – in particular, which categories of linguistic meaning should be distinguished and how this should be done, and at which level(s) of description.

unique window onto both the complexity of language construction and interpretation and the understanding of what meaning is about”.

In Fischer (2006) 22 scholars – who could be regarded as representative of most of the major approaches to discourse particles and discourse markers – were asked to describe the results of their research in terms of four major challenges. Firstly, they had to provide their definition of what a discourse particle is. Secondly, they had to describe the range of functions a specific particle may have. Thirdly, contributors had to explain the relationship between the range(s) of meanings that has been identified for each discourse particle. In other words, in those cases where no homosemy is involved, the polysemous relationship between the different senses and meaning should be “motivated” in terms of how shifts in meaning in time tend to occur across languages. Fourthly, each contributor had to relate his/her study of discourse particles “to other questions of general linguistics interest, such as the semantics/pragmatic interface, the nature and level of discourse, or communicative functions” (Fischer 2006:3). More recently, see Aijmer (2013).

In their analysis and description of BH, a language based on a relatively small corpus that has a complicated and long transmission history, scholars of BH have to face the reality that there are no living speakers to consult. For this reason, a feature of many studies of BH during the last fifty years has been their commitment to empirical rigour, viz. working from the limited data at hand in order to identify and label categories that could be postulated on the basis of the syntagmatic and paradigmatic relationships of the members of those categories.\(^9\) In the process of these (mostly) structuralist-oriented approaches the validity of many traditional categories (for example, word class and sentence constituent labels) were often called into question.\(^10\) The limitation of the clause as biggest unit of linguistic description prompted adherents of so-called text-linguistic approaches to look for a system of patterns beyond the boundaries of the clause and sentence.\(^11\)

Venturing beyond the boundaries of the clause, however, opened up a new world of challenges where clauses (or often clause fragments) and sentences are used in conversations and written texts. According to Munné (2013:176-196), in this world the reality of language as dynamic complex entity, of which fuzziness is inevitably a part, often highlights linguists’ oversimplification of categorisation.\(^12\) This implies, for

\(^{9}\) See the historical overviews of the study of Biblical Hebrew in Van der Merwe (1987; 1989; 1994; 2003).

\(^{10}\) See, for example, Rechenmacher and Van der Merwe (2005).

\(^{11}\) See Van der Merwe (1997a; 1997b). See, for example, also Longacre (1989; 1995) and Talstra (1997; 2002). Even Waltke & O’Connor, who prefer to focus on the clause as grammatical unit in their grammar (1990:647), remark: “The continuity of Hebrew discourse, especially narrative, is the result of two factors. The first is the dominance of a single clausal coordinating conjunction over all others. … The second factor responsible for discourse continuity is the class of clausal adverbs, particles that modify an entire clause, either in itself (notably the negative particles) or in relation to the surrounding discourse (the emphatic and restrictive particles)”. They (1990:221) eventually categorise, for example, לָכֵן as a complex preposition which functions as an adverbial and as an emphatic clausal adverb that “introduces a proposed or anticipated response after a statement of a certain condition” (for example, Isa 5:12-14; 26:14) (Waltke & O’Connor 1990:662-666).

\(^{12}\) Often the limitations of attempts by some scholars trying to understand linguistic phenomena, both outside of as well as within the boundaries of the clause, mainly in terms of binary oppositions also became apparent. See
example, that it is impossible to operate always with neat categories that state necessary and sufficient conditions for its members. We will at most be able to identify the prototypes of our categories.\textsuperscript{13}

To further complicate matters, the abovementioned dynamic view of language implies that our working model has to take into consideration that the meaning of linguistic constructions is not static, but typically tends to develop and/or shift. These shifts cannot be predicted, but they also do not take place in a random way.\textsuperscript{14} The shifts of the meaning of linguistic constructions, whether it is a lexeme or a grammatical construction, can typically be explained only in hindsight, for example, as shifts from a concrete to an abstract meaning, as a generalisation or as a specification, as a metonymic or a metaphorical extension.\textsuperscript{15} In this process analogy\textsuperscript{16} and frequency\textsuperscript{17} of use also play an important role. A complicating factor, again highly relevant for our working model, is that some linguistic constructions may accumulate new meanings while retaining their historical older meanings.\textsuperscript{18} However, other constructions may completely lose the older meanings, or retain them only in very specific contexts.\textsuperscript{19}

When it comes to a model of communication, it is important to keep in mind that we use language not simply to convey information (or a message). Particularly relevant for understanding discourse particles is that, in the words of Aijmer et al. (2006:105), “our utterances can be used

\textsuperscript{13} Andrason (2011). For a overview of how linguistic categorisation has been dealt with since Aristotle, see Aarts et al. (2004).
\textsuperscript{14} For an explication of the view of categorisation that is embraced in this paper, see Taylor (2003).
\textsuperscript{15} See Diewald (2006:409-414).
\textsuperscript{16} See also Mosegaard Hansen (2006:29).
\textsuperscript{17} See Fischer (2011:31-42).
\textsuperscript{18} See Bybee (2011:69-78).
\textsuperscript{19} See also Aijmer (2006:108).
\textsuperscript{19} Lewis (2006:51) states: “Some polyfunctional discourse-marking expressions … have two or more clearly related and mutually dependent meanings; other have clearly related but non-predictable ones (i.e. they have different conventionalised senses which must be learned)”. See also Frank-Job (2006:372).
strategically to take up different positions vis-à-vis other people, and other opinions in a heteroglossic perspective”.20

2.2. What are discourse particles?21

The category “discourse particle” in our working model is not regarded as a typical grammatical part of speech or word class.22 In other words, its members are not identified on the basis of their morphological (that is, their forms) or syntactic features (that is, how they combine with other clause constituents). Members of this category are distinguished on the basis of the function they fulfil in a text or discourse.

According to Fischer (2006:8-12), discourse particles in conversations are primarily items constituting independent utterances; they function mainly to manage conversations and their host units can be the topic structure, extra-linguistic activities or participation frameworks of a conversation. However, in written texts discourse particles are typically considered to be integrated into host utterances; they have a connecting function and their host units are aspects of utterances (Fischer 2006:10-11).


21 Fischer (2006:4) prefers the term “discourse particle” to “discourse marker” and explains: “The term discourse particle suggests a focus on small uninflected words that are only loosely integrated into the sentence structure, if at all. The term particle is used in contrast to clitics, full words, and bound morphemes. Using the term discourse particle furthermore distinguishes discourse particles/markers from larger entities, such are phrasal idioms, that fulfil similar functions”. She elsewhere (2006:7) indicates that discourse particles are a subset of discourse markers and fulfil the same type of function. In our study we regard expressions such as לָכֵן, לְמַעַן, עַל־כֵן and וְעַתָּה in which two lexemes have fused, as discourse particles too.

22 Weydt (2006:205-206) lists a range of labels that are associated with what we call discourse particles: “pragmatic markers, interpersonal markers, argumentative markers, presentative particles, parentheticality markers, modal particles, adverbial connectives, connectives, modal discourse particles, elusive particles, particles of truth, contrastive and set-evoking particles, sentence-structure particles, down-toners”. Mosegaard Hansen (2006:27) remarks: “I do not conceive of discourse markers as constituting a part of speech, for it seems that very few linguistic items are exclusively devoted to this function” (2006:27).
Our corpus is a written text (often based on oral traditions). Although our corpus often includes conversations, our working model will work with the assumption that those conversations have been moulded as “spoken texts” and that discourse particles used in them tend to display the features of those used in written texts rather than typical conversations. In this study, we follow Fischer (2006:7) by regarding discourse particles as a subset of discourse markers. It is therefore possible to adopt the following generic definition by Onodera (2011:615):

A discourse marker signals the speaker’s view/attitude/judgement with respect to the relationship between the chunks of discourse that precede and follow it, typically in the sentence (utterance)-initial positions.

2.3. How do discourse particles work?

From our definition it is clear that DPs do not have referential meaning. Their semantic core is discourse deictic, that is, they have a pointing function, and in particular they connect “chunks” of discourse. However, these “chunks” may be, but are not necessarily, the information contents of explicit utterances. They may be any unit in the mental discourse that is “under construction” in the communicative event between interlocutors (Mosegaard Hansen 2006:26). These units may be gleaned from previous utterances, “from the nonlinguistic context, as well as contextually relevant encyclopedic knowledge” (Mosegaard Hansen 2006:26).

The communicative event in which DPs are used is interactive. The interaction may involve the speech turns of a speaker A and a speaker B. It may also involve the relationship between chunk A and chunk B, which a speaker points out to his/her addressee(s) to take into account when processing what is conveyed to him/her/them.

At this juncture a speaker’s subjective view, attitude or judgement comes into play. It is expressed in the light of how the conceptual world of the addressee(s) is assessed by the speaker. A hearer typically wants to confirm consonance (in the case of elaboration, evidence or justification), or resolve any dissonance (in the case of contrast, retreat or concession), between his and the addressee’s conceptual world. A degree of speaker commitment is also sometimes involved, in particular when justification is provided (Lewis 2006:46).

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23 For evidence of instances where the BH corpus reflects its “oral” roots, see Polak (1998).
From the discussion above, it is evident that DPs operate at three levels, a semantic one (where their semantic core is operative to indicate a particular type of connection between units of content), a pragmatic one (where they are used for interactional purposes and signal that speech events need to be connected) and a modal level (where the subjective point of view of the speaker comes into play). The question that remains is how should the meaning(s) of a particular discourse particle, such as לָכֵן, be analysed and described?

2.4. Establishing the categories of meaning of discourse particles

In order to establish the meaning of a specific DP at a synchronic level in a context, we hypothesise that the following features of the meaning of discourse particles need to be kept in mind:

1. DPs typically have a deictic semantic core.
2. A lexical item used as a DP has in its pre-history been used as a different and “more typical” word class; for example, עַתָה had been used as an adverb of time.
3. However, when a lexical item is used as a DP at a synchronic level, the meaning of its ancestor may still be operative.
4. The scope of a lexical item that has developed into a DP is typically broader than that of its ancestor, for example, more than one clause.
5. The meaning of DPs tends to be more subjective than that of their ancestors (Mosegaard Hansen 2006:29). This means they tend to be used to express speaker’s assessments of situations and/or relationships between situations rather than the objective reality that their ancestors referred to.
6. DPs are “porous: context can ‘leak’ into their meanings, their uses, and their functions in different degrees” (Schiffren 2006:336). The different meanings of a specific DP may also be constituted by the conventionalisation of form-meaning pairs in

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See also Borderia (2006:86-93) and Travis (2006:224).

Scholars differ as to whether the semantic core is invariant and/or how shifts in its meaning should be explained (Fischer 2006:12-20).

For the scope that DPs may have, see Waltereit (2006:64-66).
specific contextual frames or “communicative domains” (see Fischer 2006:441).  

7. Some members of a category may be more prototypical than others. In a closed corpus the high frequency and wide distribution of a category’s members could be interpreted as indicative of its prototypicality.

8. DPs may operate at different levels, that is, semantic, pragmatic and a modal level.

For the purposes of this study, a particle has been selected that, according to a preliminary study, on the one hand, appears to display the features of a typical discourse marker; on the other hand, for practical purposes, it neither occurs very frequently nor does it display too many different meanings.

3. לָכֵן

3.1. Application of working model

If we now consider all instances of לָכֵן in the Hebrew Bible in the light of the first five parameters listed in Section 2.4 above, it turns out: (1) לָכֵן indeed has a deictic value; (2) In our corpus, only a few cases (#4-6) have been identified where it could be argued that it functions as a conjunctive adverb rather than a discourse particle. In these instances, לָכֵן is obviously a near-synonym interchangeable with the more “objective” עַל־כֵן;  

(3) In all other cases, we can accept Jenni’s (2000:283) suggestion that לָכֵן does not merely connect two clauses or even sentences; (4) A speaker typically uses לָכֵן to construe a relationship between the contents of two chunks of clauses in a subjective argument (for empirical evidence, cf. the examples discussed in Section 3.4).

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27 Frank-Job (2006) states: “In a way which is similar to the processes of lexicalization and grammaticalization, pragmatization functions by means of routinization and frequency. This leads to some formally detectable features of DMs”.

28 By “modal” is meant “epistemic modality” and not deontic modality. See also Langacker (2008).

29 For an analysis of עַל־כֵן, see Jenni (2005:118-133). See also Section 3.4.3.
The first hypothesis we investigated is that of Jenni (2000:283), namely that in all instances where לָכֵּן is used, the same semantic core value could be postulated (see Section 3.2).

We did not find a mere taxonomy of possible logical relationships between the contents connected by לָכֵּן (as is done by Jenni 2000:284-286) very helpful; hence our second hypothesis. We hypothesise that distinct categories of use could be distinguished in terms of the contextual frames in which the lexeme is used. For each frame postulated, the structure and content of the utterances that are connected should be analysed, first to establish the family relationship of members of that category. Secondly, it must be determined whether the semantic core is typically maintained, and whether it may even neutralise the apparently conflicting (for example, adversative 30 ) logical relationship of the units that are connected. However, room had to be left for instances where the context “leaked” into the basic semantic core. For heuristic purposes, we commence this part of our investigation with a brief description of the semantic core (Section 3.2) and distribution of לָכֵּן in the Hebrew Bible (Section 3.3). In Section 3.4 the contextual frames are postulated and the most distinctive features of each described.

3.2. Semantic core of לָכֵּן

In the light of our analysis of all the occurrences of לָכֵּן we have to concur with Jenni (2000:283) that the lexeme must be understood from the perspective that its morphological components provide, viz. “ל = as far as” + “כֵּן = thus, as just been told”, in other words, “under these
circumstances” or “that being so”. 31 This core backward-pointing semantic value, which is also suggested in BDB (1906), is present in all, except perhaps two, instances of its use in the Hebrew Bible. 32

In #7 and #8 the content of the utterance headed by לָכֵֵ֗ן is already discourse active for the addressee. In other words, a translation value of “yes, surely” is prompted by the context of use. 33 However, with only two examples, of which the interpretation is not uncontested, it is difficult to draw a firm conclusion.

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(NBV) 24 God maakt korte metten met de machtigen en stelt anderen in hun plaats.

25 *Jazeker*, hij doorziet hun daden en brengt hen in de nacht ten val; verpletterd liggen ze terneer (Job 34:24-25). 34

8

(NRSV) 44 I will punish Bel in Babylon, and make him disgorge what he has swallowed ...

47 *Assuredly*, the days are coming when I will punish the images of Babylon; her whole land shall be put to shame …

52 *Therefore* the time is surely coming, says the Lord, when I will punish her

31 Since in Jer 2:33; 5:2 and Zech 11:7 serious text-critical problems are involved, these instances were not included in our analysis.

32 In footnote 2 we have already pointed out that Jenni (2000) convincingly argues that the particle does not have an epistemic modal sense that should be related to its etymology – as implied by the suggested translation values of “assuredly” or “surely” in Clines et al. (1998) and HALOT (1999:530), and which are adopted in the NJPS.

33 NET translates Isa. 61:7 likewise. See in contrast, the NBV (“daarom”), NRSV (“therefore”) and NIV (“and so”).

34 Clines (2006:779), as well as the NRSV and NIV, interpret this verse like Isa. 26:14. According BDB (1906:487) Isa. 26:14 is an example of the following category: “inferring the cause from the effect, or developing what is logically involved in a statement”.

...
idols, and through all her land the wounded shall groan (Jer 51:44-52).35

3.3. Distribution of לָכֵן

The 200 instances of לָכֵן in the Hebrew Bible are not very evenly distributed, viz. it is attested predominantly in the prophetic books (166 times). Furthermore, among the prophetic books it occurs 63 times in Ezekiel, 55 times in Jeremiah, 27 times in Isaiah.36 It appears only once in later texts, viz. 2 Chr 18:18 (parallel to 1 Kgs 22:19). In the parallel to 2 Kgs 22:20, viz. 2 Chr 34:28, לָכֵן is omitted. לָכֵּן occurs, with one exception (1 Sam 27:6), exclusively in discourse.

If one views the distribution of לָכֵן in terms of the communication frames in which it is used, most frequent are instances where threats (predominantly) and promises (sometimes) are announced, typical in prophetic contexts, after the statement of their grounds (Section 3.4.1). Significantly less frequent are instances where לָכֵן is used in contexts where no announcements are made. This may happen in argumentative dialogues (Section 3.4.2.) or monologues where facts are stated (Section 3.4.3).

3.4. Contextual frames of לָכֵן

3.4.1 לָכֵן in argumentative prophetic announcements

Most typical are instances where the grounds of an announcement (or an announcement that is commissioned) are construed by a speaker (mostly God, a prophet or prophetic figure) as facts. The action or situation that is announced (or commissioned to be announced), is presented by the speaker as “unavoidable” consequences of those grounds. The facts are construed by means of language that abounds with strong assertions in the form of rhetorical questions (#9), infinitive constructions (#10) or constructions with הנה,37 focused constituents38 and/or focus particles.39

35 For other translations of these verses, cf. NBV, NET, NIV and NJB.
36 לָכֵּן occurs twice in Genesis, once in Exodus, three times in Numbers, but never in Leviticus or Deuteronomy. In the Former Prophets it is attested 16 times (however, not in Joshua or 2 Samuel). As far as the Writings are concerned, it occurs only in Psalms (5x), Job (6x) and 2 Chronicles (1x).
Sometimes a woe-saying (#11), an interjection\(^\text{40}\) or other means\(^\text{41}\) are used to profile the details of the grounds. A stated ground is also often explicitly marked by means of יַעַן (#12).

\(^{13}\) Then Isaiah said: “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also? \(^{14}\) Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel (Isa 7:13-14).\(^{42}\)

They acted shamefully, yes they committed abomination; what is worse, they were not at all ashamed, they did not know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; at the time when I punish them, they shall be overthrown, says the Lord (Jer 8:12).\(^{43}\)

\(^{1}Woe to those who plan iniquity, to those who plot evil on their beds!

\(^{3}\) Therefore, the Lord says: “Look, I am planning disaster against this people, from which you cannot save yourselves. You will no longer walk proudly, for it will be a time of calamity (Mic 2:1-3).\(^{44}\)


\(^{41}\) Isa 16:7; 51:21; Jer 22:17-18; Ezek 23:19-22; Amos 7:12-17. In Zeph 2:9, the ground is what God has heard.

\(^{42}\) Num 16:11; 1 Sam 2:30; 2 Kgs 1.4, 6, 16; Isa 27:9; 52:6; Jer 7:20; 8:10; 18:21; 23:30; 32:28; 44:11; 49:2, 20, 26; 50:45; Ezek 12:23; 18:30; 34:18-21. See also Amos 3:3-11.


\(^{44}\) Isa 5:13-24; Jer 23:2; Amos 6:1-6; Mic 2:4-5. Cf. also Jer 48:10-12.
But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not trust in me, to show my holiness before the eyes of the Israelites, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them” (Num 20:12).

The firmly established grounds are sometimes recapped by a different speaker (#13-14) or described in more detail by the same speaker (#15) in the utterance(s) following יָאָרֵם.  

"They have spoken falsely of the Lord, and have said, “He will do nothing. No evil will come upon us, and we shall not see sword or famine”. The prophets are nothing but wind, for the word is not in them. Thus shall it be done to them! Therefore thus says the Lord, the God of hosts: ‘I am now making my words in your mouth a fire, and this people wood, and the fire shall devour them’ (Jer 5:12-14)."

But in the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen a more shocking thing: they commit adultery and walk in lies; they strengthen the hands of evildoers, so that no one turns from wickedness; all of them have become like Sodom to me, and its inhabitants like Gomorrah.

"Therefore thus says the Lord of hosts concerning the prophets: ‘I am going to make them eat wormwood, and give them poisoned water to drink; for from the prophets of Jerusalem ungodliness has spread throughout the land’ (Jer 23:14-

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45 1 Kgs 14:7-10; 2 Kgs 22:20; Jer 19:4-6; 29:31-32; Ezek 13:23; 16:36-37; 22:19; 25:3-4, 6-7, 8-9, 12-13, 15-16; 26:2-3; 29:6-8, 9-10; 35:5-6, 10-11; 36:13-14. In Isa 8:7 and 29:14, יָאָרֵם is used to present the grounds as fact. Cf. also Jer 9:12-14 where יָאָרֵם is even repeated); 31:3-11; 34:18-21.

46 In a few instances the addressees are profiled with reference to the behaviour that prompted the announcement (Isa 28:14; 51:21; Jer 44:26; Ezek 34:4, 7, 9).

47 Jer 25:8; Ezek 21:29 (the utterance with יָאָרֵם is even repeated); 31:3-11; 34:18-21.
15. They hate the one who reproves in the gate, and they abhor the one who speaks the truth.

Therefore because you trample on the poor and take from them levies of grain, you have built houses of hewn stone, but you shall not live in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink their wine (Amos 5:10-11).

Sometimes, לָכֵן is part of an already announced action (typically punishment) of which the grounds have already been specified by a sentence introduced with כִי. לָכֵן then typically introduces one of the grave consequences of the announced punishment (#16).

And I declare to him that I am about to punish his house forever, for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them. Therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli’s house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever. (1 Sam 3:14).

When the ground has been established as a shared perspective (cognitive state) about the person or people under discussion by the array of constructions referred to above, the announcement is made. In the

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50 In Ezek 14:12-23 God’s punishment of Jerusalem is described. In Ezek 15:2-5 the worthlessness of a burnt vine is described. With this image discourse active, the speaker announces in Ezek 15:6-8 the consequences of Jerusalem’s punishment. See also Ezek 24:3-5 and 6-14.
51 Jer 49:23-26; 50:29-30, 35-39; Hos 2:3-5, 6-8; Mic 1:14. In Isa 29:17-24 a promise is involved and in Isa 65:13, יַעַן is used instead of כִי. In Ezek 21:9, יַעַן is used to recap the previously spelled out announced punishment – before spelling out the grave details of the punishment that is introduced by לָכֵן.
announcements yiqtol forms of the verb (#9, #10, #12, #15) and participles nearly always preceded by הִנֵה, (#11, #13, #14) are used. Less frequent are instances where qatal (#16), imperatives, verbless clauses, and weqatal forms of the verb are used to refer to the contents of a threat or promise.

Sometimes imperatives are used to appeal to an audience to proclaim or listen to an announcement.


55 Isa 10:24; Jer 18:21; Ezek 7:5-7; 21:7; 23:35 (רָשָׁא; Zeph 3:8).

56 Exod 6:6; Jer 23:30; Ezek 24:6; and 9; Amos 3:11; 5:16. In Num 16:11, what is “announced” is presented as a punishable transgression implied by what is strongly asserted in 16:9-10. For more instances with verbless clauses, see the fixed expression with Hàng in #20.

57 Jer 23:39; Ezek 13:13; 11:7; 17:19; 25:13; 35:11; 38:14-16 (with long interlude directed at the addressee). In Ezek 31:10-11, a weyiqtol is used.

58 Sometimes the “promise” to the addressees resides in action that will be taken against their enemies (2 Kgs 19:32; Isa 10:24; 28:16; 29:22; 37:33; Jer 51:36) or are made in a context where threats are announced (2 Kgs 22:20; Jer 16:14; Hos 2:16). In Exod 6:6; Num 25:12; Isa 30:18; 52:6; 53:12; 61:7; Jer 23:7; 35:19; Ezek 11:16, 17; 37:12; 39:25 and Zech 1:16 outright promises by God are announced.
Say therefore to the Israelites, ‘I am the Lord, and I will free you from the burdens of the Egyptians and deliver you from slavery to them. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment (Exod 6:6).

Therefore hear, O nations, and know, O congregation, what will happen to them.

Hear, O earth; I am going to bring disaster on this people, the fruit of their schemes, because they have not given heed to my words; and as for my teaching, they have rejected it (Jer 6:18-19).

In a few cases, לָכֵּן is repeated because of the intervention of an embedded direct speech by Yahweh. The second לָכֵּן is then used to return to the prophet’s speech (#19).

Therefore thus says the Lord concerning the people of Anathoth, who seek your life, and say, “You shall not prophesy in the name of the Lord, or you will die by our hand” – therefore thus says the Lord of hosts: I am going to punish them; the young men shall die by the sword; their sons and their daughters shall die by famine (Jer 11:21-22).

Also frequent in “opening” announcements are the phrases לָכֵּן thus says the Lord (#11) and, predominantly in Ezekiel, לָכֵּן נא מִלֵּֽהּ יְהֹוָֽה. These authenticators are often further specified (#13 and #14).

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60 Jer 42:15 (with לָכֵּן נא מִלֵּֽהּ יְהֹוָֽה); Ezek 16:35; 34:7, 9; 2 Chr 18:18.

61 I thank one of the anonymous reviewers who pointed this out.

62 See also Isa 28:9-16; Ezek 11:15-17.

Since what is announced typically involves drastic measures and dramatic events, these “authenticators” could be regarded as one of the means to remove any doubt among the addressees that what is announced, will or could materialise. In announcements introduced by לָכֵן, only one or two types of formulaic expressions (#20 and #21) could be detected in the corpus. However, a range of other linguistically marked constructions occur in the announcements introduced by לָכֵן. Consider, for example, how הנָה is often used to draw the attention of addressees to what is about to, or what will, happen (for example, #11, #13 and #14), how often some of the details of what is announced are clearly articulated (for example, by means of focus constructions), and how oaths are sometimes used as part of the announcements. There is little doubt that the BH-speaking addressees would find it hard to ignore what is announced by means of לָכֵן. Furthermore, there is evidence that the confrontational sense of לָכֵן is sometimes exploited by a staggering of the discourse particle to make highly emotional appeals (#22). Significant

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65 נְאֻם־יְهوָה is also used relatively often, for example, 1 Samuel 2:30; Jeremiah 2:9; 7:32; 16:14; 19:6; 23:7, 30; 48:12; 49:2; 51:52; Zephaniah 2:9; 3:8, but not always in the opening phrase of the announcement, for example in Jeremiah 23:12; 29:32; 48:12; 49:26; 50:30; 51:47-48; Ezekiel 36:14; Zephaniah 2:9; 3:8; Zechariah 1:16.


67 See footnote 53 for instances where הנָה heads a participle. הנָה may also head clauses with yiqtol (for example, Isaiah 65:13) and qatal (for example, Isaiah 51:21-22 and Ezekiel 25:7) verbs. Since a common ground has already been established that implies the “unavoidable” consequences of the addressees’ behavior, it is hard to postulate that what is announced is unexpected or a surprise to them. This is contra to what is claimed in Miller-Naudé & van der Merwe (2011).

68 See, for example, the fronted adjuncts of manner in Isaiah 5:25; 27:9; Jeremiah 14:14; 18:17; Ezekiel 21:19; Amos 4:13 and Zechariah 2:9.

69 See, for example, 1 Samuel 3:14; Jeremiah 49:20; 50:45; Ezekiel 5:10; 34:7-8; 35:6, 10; 36:5, 7; Zephaniah 2:9.

70 Ezekiel 34:2-10 (with לָכֵן in vv. 7 and 9) and Amos 5:1-17 (with לָכֵן in vv. 11, 13 and 16) appear also to represent the build-up of announcements of judgement.
about #22 is that a series of announcements culminate in God’s personal (indicated by means of a fronted subject) commitment in the form of an oath that he will punish the nations that insulted His people.\(^\text{71}\)

Therefore thus says the Lord God: Look, I am against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and will break his arms, both the strong arm and the one that was broken; and I will make the sword fall from his hand. (Ezek 30:22).\(^\text{72}\)

Therefore, look, days are coming, says the Lord ... (Jer 9:16).\(^\text{73}\)

by means of \(לָכֵן\). In Ezek 23:35 an announcement introduced by \(לָכֵן\), summarises the ground plus judgement described in 11-21 and 22-34 respectively.

A build-up of announcements with \(לָכֵן\) in Ezek 5:5-7, 8 and 9-10 is concluded in 5:11-12 with a similar use of an oath. Cf. also Ezek. 20:21-26, 27-29, 30-31. In Ezek 35:3-15 oaths are used after announcements with \(לָכֵן\) vv. 6 and 11 in the course of the build-up of the announcement of a judgement.

The pattern involved is: \(לָכֵן\) + PP ... + weqatal. Cf. Ezek 5:7-8; 13:8; 13:20; 26:3; 29:10; 30:22; 34:9-10. Cf. also Ezek 34:20. This pattern also occurs without \(לָכֵן\), for example, Jer 21:13 and Ezek 21:8; 35:3.

Thus says the Lord God: Because the enemy said of you, “Aha!” and, “The ancient heights have become our possession,”

therefore prophesy, and say: Thus says the Lord God: Because they made you desolate indeed, and crushed you from all sides, so that you became the possession of the rest of the nations, and you became an object of gossip and slander among the people;

therefore, O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord God: Thus says the Lord God to the mountains and the hills, the watercourses and the valleys, the desolate wastes and the deserted towns, which have become a source of plunder and an object of derision to the rest of the nations all around;

therefore thus says the Lord God: I am speaking in my hot jealousy against the rest of the nations, and against all Edom, who, with wholehearted joy and utter contempt, took my land as their possession, because of its pasture, to plunder it.

Therefore prophesy concerning the land of Israel, and say to the mountains and hills, to the watercourses and valleys, Thus says the Lord God: I am speaking in my jealous wrath, because you have suffered the insults of the nations;

therefore thus says the Lord God: I swear that the nations that are all around you shall themselves suffer insults (Ezek 36:2-7).

To summarise our analysis of announcements with לָכֵֵ֗ן:

- Announcements introduced by לָכֵֵ֗ן are made only after a speaker has explicitly established a firm common ground between him and his addressee (using a range of linguistically marked constructions, for example, rhetorical questions, focus constructions, causal markers, etc.).
- The announcements themselves may be prompted by directives to listen, to declare and/or authenticators.
- The announcements themselves are very often pointed out by means of הִנֵה and refer vividly to what will or is about to happen (or not).
- By subjectively relating firmly established grounds with their vividly presented consequences, the speaker, on the one hand, commits himself to the announcement (or commissioned announcement) and, on the other hand, leaves no room for the addressees not to take the announcement seriously.
• The frequent use of לָכֵן in the announcements of threats most probably paved the way for (1) a threatening tone that “leaked into” its basic semantic core “that being so”; (2) adding credibility to descriptions of the grave consequences of already announced disasters (#16); and (3) its “unlogical” repetition in emotional arguments (often culminating in an oath) – contributing eventually to its threatening tone (#8 and #22).
• The inevitability of the threats that are associated with announcements introduced by לָכֵן might also have given the few instances where promises have been announced by the DP some compelling force and credibility.

If one now considers the abovementioned uses of לָכֵן, it is reasonable to argue that the strong argumentative conclusive sense of the DP most probably neutralises the adversative relationship that could be postulated between the grounds and consequences of announcements such as those we find in #3.74

3.4.2 לָכֵן in argumentative dialogues
לָכֵן occurs in only a few rare instances in dialogues, predominantly in non-prophetic contexts. Typically, Speaker A makes a strongly asserted statement either by means of a rhetorical question (#23), by הֵן (#24) or an infinite absolute construction (#25). Speaker B then acknowledges the validity of the assertion by means of לָכֵן, “that being so, granted, all right” and presents an answer to counter (#23-24) or confirm (#25) what has been asserted.75

23 וַתֵֹּ֣אמֶרָלֵָ֗הָּוְלָקַָ֕חַתָּ֖אֶת־אִישִָׁ֔יָוְלָקַָ֖חַתָגֵַּ֥םָאֶת־דודָאֵ֖יָבְנִ֑יָוַתֵֹּ֣אמֶרָרָחֵֵ֗ אלָכֵןָּ֙יִשְׁכַַ֤בָעִמָךְָּ֙הַלַָ֔יְלָהָתַ֖חַתָדודָאֵֵּ֥יָבְנִֵּֽךְ׃
(NIV) But she said to her, “Wasn’t it enough that you took away my husband? Will you take my son’s mandrakes too?” “Very well,” Rachel said, “he can sleep with you tonight in return for your son’s mandrakes” (Gen. 30:15).76

74 The same applies to Isa 30:18; Jer 30:16; Ezek 39:25 and Hos 2:16.
75 In Job 20:2 Zophar uses לָכֵן to indicate that the content of his speech is a response to what Job’s attack on his friends implies about God in Job 19:20-22. See, in contra, Clines (1998:473), who does not think such a link is involved.
76 Judg 8:5; 11:7; Job 42:3. In 1 Kgs 22:19-23 a prophet argues with a king. Neither a prototypical dialogue, nor a prototypical prophetic announcement is
Then Cain said to the Lord, “My punishment is too great to endure! Look! You are driving me off the land today, and I must hide from your presence. I will be a homeless wanderer on the earth; whoever finds me will kill me.”

But the Lord said to him, “All right then, if anyone kills Cain, Cain will be avenged seven times as much” (Gen 3:13-15).

In those days the Philistines gathered their forces for war, to fight against Israel. Achish said to David, “You know, of course, that you and your men are to go out with me in the army.” David said to Achish, “Very well, then you shall know what your servant can do.” Achish said to David, “Very well, I will make you my bodyguard for life.” (1 Sam 28:1-2).

In Job (#26) לָכֵּן is used twice by Elihu, not in a speech turn, but to link appeals to listen to him after a firm ground between him and his addressee has been established.

Therefore I say, “Listen to me; let me also declare my opinion.’
See, I waited for your words, I listened for your wise sayings, while you searched out what to say” (Job 32:10).

3.4.3. לָכֵּן in “fact reporting” statements
In a few instances, typically introducing a clause headed by qatal, both in the 1st person (#27) and the 3rd person (#28), לָכֵּן is used to explain the grounds of factual situations. This use of לָכֵּן is very similar to that of על- involved. Compare also the dialogue between Jeremiah and God in Jer 15:18-19, where no typical prophetic announcement is made.

Job 34:10.
This happens once in narrative literature, once in Job, four times in Psalms and three times in the prophetic literature.

For Egypt’s help is worthless and empty, therefore I have called her, “Rahab who sits still” (Isa 30:7).

So that day Achish gave him Ziklag; therefore Ziklag has belonged to the kings of Judah to this day (1 Sam 27:6).

4. **CONCLUSION**

This study established that knowing the meaning of a DP entails much more than determining a list of its possible translation values. Insights into the complexity of language and how linguistic meaning works provided some parameters for the investigation of לָכֵן. For example, DPs may have a semantic core, which in the case of לָכֵן could be represented as “under these circumstances” or “that being so”. Since DP’s are part of language as a complex and dynamic system, the meaning of lexical items may shift in time, but the semantic core of a lexical unit may also remain part of its semantic potential. In the case of לָכֵן this is the case. It was found that its core semantic value may even neutralise the adversative relationship of the chunks of information it connects, for example in #3. Furthermore, its core semantic value tends to persist to such a degree in all its uses in the Hebrew Bible that a shift to an affirmative meaning (“assuredly, certainly”) for לָכֵן could not be justified. In this regard, this study concurs with BDB (1906) against HALOT (1999) and Clines et al. (1998).

On the basis of the contextual frames within which it is used in the Hebrew Bible, three main categories of use have been identified:

1. לָכֵן in argumentative prophetic announcements (prototypical);
2. לָכֵן in argumentative dialogues (seldom);

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78 1 Sam 27:6.  
80 Pss 16:9; 73:6, 10; 78:21; 119:119.  
81 Isa 30:7; Ezek 23:9 and Amos 5:13.  
82 Ezek 23:9; Pss 16:9; 73:6, 10; 119:119.  
83 Isa 16:7; Amos 5:13, Ps 78:21 and Job 37:24.
3. \( \text{לָכֵן} \) in “fact reporting” statements (seldom).

By far the most prototypical use of \( \text{לָכֵן} \) is that of category 1. It may be argued that through frequency of use \( \text{לָכֵן} \) accrued the sense of an announcement of an inevitable and justified threat. This compelling force of these announcements might have contributed to the “trustworthiness” of the few promises in the corpus that are also announced by means of \( \text{לָכֵן} \).

In a few instances (that is, 3) the meaning of \( \text{לָכֵן} \) seems to overlap with that of the “fact reporting” sense that is associated with \( \text{עַל־כֵּן} \). How these two lexemes in turn differ from \( \text{עֶשָּׁה} \) warrants a systematic analysis.

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