example, *liškâ* and *niškâ,* 'room'; *mazz lôt* and *mazz rôt,* 'constellations'; *l* and *n* , 'to press, urge.' Aloysius Fitzgerald has collected examples of other such variants in poetic texts; he alleges that in such cases the poet "is using a dialectal form that fits better the sound-patterning of his line" than the standard would.[32]

[Page 94] d   Other interchanges are attested for sibilants (*l* , *ls, lz,* 'to exult'; *q* and *q,* 'to laugh'), velars (sgr and skr, 'to close'), and bilabials (*pl* and *ml* , 'to escape').

e   *Metathesis*, that is, the transposition of elements of a word, is part of the regular morphology of the *Hithpael* (see 26.1.1b). It also affects a few roots, which show up in two forms: the common שַׂלְמָה 'mantle,' and the etymologically correct שִׂמְלָה, with the same meaning; the common (and etymologically correct) כֶּבֶשׂ 'young ram' and כִּבְשָׂה 'ewe-lamb,' alongside כֶּשֶׂב 'young ram' and כִּשְׂבָּה 'lamb.'

<h1 style="text-align:center;">[Page 95] 6 Gender</h1>

6.1 Introduction

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[32] A. Fitzgerald, "The Interchange of L, N, and R in Biblical Hebrew," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 97 (1978) 481–88, at 481.

a   Gender is a feature of many languages and plays an important role in the structure of Hebrew.[1] As an aspect of morphology, gender affects both syntax and the lexicon; through the lexicon, gender is a facet of semantics, that is, of the way the world around us is represented in words. Like the other Semitic languages, Hebrew formally distinguishes two genders, *masculine* and *feminine*; the distinction is used for nouns (both substantives and adjectives), pronouns, and verbs. The formal system in nouns involves an unmarked class of masculine forms and a largely marked class of feminine forms.

[Page 96] b   In linguistic theory an opposition involves *marking* if one member has something extra or unusual about it to distinguish it from the other (3.3.5e). For example, in the opposition מֶלֶךְ : מַלְכָּה, the gender of מֶלֶךְ is not shown by any evident device, while the gender of מַלְכָּה is shown by the ending ‎-ָה‎; מֶלֶךְ is the unmarked or zero (∅)-marked member of the pair, while מַלְכָּה is the marked member. In general in Hebrew the masculine gender is unmarked, while the feminine is marked. The unmarked member may have the same value as its opposite, and thus unmarked masculine nouns may refer to females. The marked member of a linguistic pair attracts more attention than the unmarked, and so in studying gender it may seem we are dealing with the "problem" of the feminine, but in reality we are concerned with the grammatical system of *masculine* : *feminine*.

c   Feminine singular nouns in Hebrew can have a variety of endings: -*â* (# 1) is most common, with -*at* (# 2) its construct, and -*t* (# 3) and -*et* (# 4) are also used. Some nouns with female referents are zero-marked (# 5).

1.	מַלְכָּה	queen (abs.)
2.	מַלְכַּת	queen (cstr.)
3.	בְּרִית	covenant (abs., cstr.)
4.	גְּדֶרֶת	wall (abs., cstr.)
5.	אֵם	mother (abs., cstr.)

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[1] For a basic introduction and an extensive and comprehensive bibliography on gender, see Muhammad Hasan Ibrahim, *Grammatical Gender: Its Origin and Development* (The Hague: Mouton, 1973) 105–9. In this chapter we follow Ibrahim's study closely. The most significant older works on Hebrew are Heimann Rosenberg, "Zum Geschlecht der hebräischen Hauptwörter," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 25 (1905) 325–39; and Karl Albrecht, "Des Geschlecht der hebräischen Hauptwörter," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 15 (1895) 313–25; 16 (1896) 41–121. Among recent studies, note D. Michel, *Grundlegung einer hebräischen Syntax* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1977), 1.25–81.

abs. absolute
cstr. construct

The *-â* ending (the *he* is a *mater lectionis*) and the endings with *t* are all at base related.[2] The *-â* arose as a pausal variant of *-at*;[3] *-t* and *-et* are morphological variants of *-at*. We refer to all these endings as the *-at* suffix, contrasting it to the Ø suffix or marker of אָב, אָם, and similar nouns.

d   Gender-marking has long attracted the interest of students of language. We survey the views of some ancient, medieval, and modern commentators before turning to a comparative study of gender as a linguistic phenomenon. Having established that gender and sex are distinct phenomena and that the *-â*/*-at* form originally signaled modification of an opposed Ø-form, we will be better able to look at the actual workings of the Hebrew gender system.

6.2 Study of Gender

6.2.1 Ancient and Medieval Views

a   The Western grammatical tradition, beginning with the Greeks, has speculated on gender.[4] Protagoras, an influential Sophist of the fifth century B.C.E., is credited with**[Page 97]** being the first to classify the three Greek genders: masculine, feminine, and neuter.[5] Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E.) went on to list the typical endings for each gender, thus classifying nouns according to their inflection or

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[2] C. Brockelmann, *Die Femininendung t im Semitischen* (Breslau: G. P. Aderholz, 1903); cf. G. Janssens, "The Feminine Ending -(a)t in Semitic," *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 6–7 (1975--76) 277–84.

[3] As in Classical Arabic. Some Semitic languages exhibit the tendency to drop the historical *-at* of the feminine in the absolute state leading to the morphological alternation: *-â* in the absolute state and *-at* in the construct. Although, as a rule, exceptional morphological facts like this one most strongly attest to inherited features, this alternation in the various Semitic languages has to be interpreted as the result of parallel development because it arose at different times in different places and because of many differences in detail. See Joshua Blau, "The Parallel Development of the Feminine Ending -at in Semitic Languages," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 51 (1980) 17–28. In contrast, M. Palmaitis has attempted to demonstrate that "the real Semitic marker of feminine, i.e., -   (and not -[a]t!), is in fact the fossilized ending of the inertive case." The widespread ending *-at* was derived secondarily from the bare stem inertive in - , and both forms became fossilized in the course of the development of the ending for the morphologically marked "weak" gender class. See Palmaitis, "On the Origin of the Semitic Marker of the Feminine," *Archiv Orientální* 49 (1981) 263–69. Cf. n. 29.

[4] See Ibrahim, *Grammatical Gender*. 14–15.

[5] John Lyons, *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1968) 10. Things neither "masculine" nor "feminine" were called "neither"; the Latin term for this yielded "neuter" (p. 11)

accidence.[6] The innovative and creative grammarians of the Sophist school anticipated the findings of modern linguistics by noting two principles in the field of gender: (1) gender formally marks the *agreement* between words in some kinds of phrases and other syntactic groups, and (2) the correspondence between (linguistic) gender and (natural) sex is only partial.[7] After the early Sophists, Greek grammarians concerned themselves largely with taxonomies. The Roman additions to Greek linguistics were slight; it is of some interest that Sextus Empiricus (late 2d century C.E.) observed that the gender of some nouns differed from one dialect to another.[8]

b   The true heirs of the Greek grammarians were the Arabs.[9] The earliest Arab grammarians, in the eighth and ninth centuries C.E., were strictly descriptive and taxonomic. They demarcated gender into masculine and feminine forms, recognizing that the feminine is the marked member of the pair. They essentially classified feminine nouns into the following groups:

(1) the true feminine: animate nouns that denote females, with or without the feminine ending (e.g., *baqarat-*[10] 'cow' and *um* 'mother')

(2) the metaphorical feminine: inanimate nouns, with or without the feminine ending (e.g., *dawlat-* 'state, government' and *yad* 'hand')

(3) the morphological feminine: nouns used exclusively to refer to males and treated as masculine but possessing a feminine ending (e.g., *khalifat-* 'caliph')

Similar categories can be established for Biblical Hebrew.

6.2.2 Modern Views

a   In contrast to the strictly descriptive approaches of the early Greek and Arab grammarians, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century linguists were long on speculation and short on descriptive analysis.[11] The Germans Herder and Adelung sought to explain the origin and function of gender, focusing on the genders assigned inanimate objects.[12] These scholars thought that so-called primitive

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[6] R. H. Robins, *Ancient and Mediaeval Grammatical Theory in Europe* (London: Bell, 1951) 23–24, and *A Short History of Linguistics* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1967) 27.

[7] Robins, *Ancient and Mediaeval Grammatical Theory*, 15.

[8] Robins, *A Short History of Linguistics*, 21.

[9] See Ibrahim, *Grammatical Gender*, 46–48, 22–23.

[10] A hyphen is placed after -*at*, the feminine marker in Classical Arabic, because a case marker must follow.

[11] Ibrahim, *Grammatical Gender*, 16–22.

[12] See Karl Brugmann, *The Nature and Origin of the Noun Genders in the Indo-European Languages* (New York: Scribner, 1897) 7–8. Johann Gottfried von Herder

peoples individualized objects, sorting them into one of two sex-based genders according to the characteristics of the object. Objects perceived to be strong, large, active, etc., were made masculine, and objects felt**[Page 98]** to be susceptible, delicate, passive, etc., became feminine. This groundless approach was commonly accepted among successive generations of linguists,[13] passing from late eighteenth-century tomes into many scholarly books of the nineteenth century. One scholar thus wrote of "primitive" people as children and remarks:

From this source [i.e., imagination] is derived the whole system of genders for inanimate things, which was perhaps inevitable at that early childish stage of the human intelligence…[14]

b   An outstanding authority on Arabic grammar, W. Wright, similarly remarked:

The vivid imagination of the Semite conceived all objects, even those that are apparently lifeless, as endowed with life and personality. Hence for him there are but *two genders*, as there exist in nature but two sexes.[15]

Such notions lay behind the presentation of gender in most of the great Hebrew grammars, those of Gesenius, Gesenius-Kautzsch-Cowley, Joüon, and others. Paul Joüon, for example, remarks:

Apart from living beings gender is metaphorical: certain nouns are masculine, by analogy with male beings; others are feminine, by analogy with female beings.[16]

So inadequate is this view that he adds directly:

It is necessary to confess, for the rest, that the reason which determined the gender often escapes us.[17]

The issue of the gender of inanimates was not the only stimulus for bad theorizing among these scholars. Carl Brockelmann, for instance, having shown, he believed, that there was no overt feminine ending in early Semitic, went on to

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(1744–1803) was one of the great Romantic students of myth and an early appreciator of Hebrew verse. His contemporary Johann Christoph Adelung (1732–1806) was a grammarian.

[13] Ibrahim, *Grammatical Gender*, 16.

[14] Frederic W. Farrar, *Chapters on Language* (London: Longmans, Green, 1865) 212; quoted by Ibrahim, *Grammatical Gender*, 16.

[15] William Wright, *Lectures on the Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1890) 131; quoted by Ibrahim, *Grammatical Gender*, 20 (incorrectly attributed to Wright's *A Grammar of the Arabic Language* [3d ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1896], 1. 131).

Joüon Paul Joüon. 1923. *Grammaire de l'hébreu biblique.*

[16] Joüon §134e / p. 410.

[17] Joüon §134e / p. 410.

conclude that females were highly regarded in that culture, which may indeed have had a matriarchal organization.[18]

c   M. H. Ibrahim, deploring the heavy dependence of these scholars on fanciful extralinguistic speculation, concludes:

Those grammarians who have written about primitive peoples and their primitive languages were like the "armchair" anthropologists of the nineteenth-century, who wrote about these peoples without any contacts with them or their culture.[19]**[Page 99]**

Anthropologists helped to reform the European ideas of pre-industrial ("primitive" or "savage") peoples and to remove them from easy stereotyping. At the same time modern linguistics has returned to its proper starting point, language, in considering gender phenomena.[20]

d   Modern linguists agree that grammatical gender serves only in part to denote sexual differences among animate beings.[21] The primary function of various systems of gender is syntactic; gender is one of the *concord systems* that connect related words within a sentence. It is of secondary importance that the so-called "feminine" formatives designate natural gender in living beings.

6.3 Comparative Perspectives

6.3.1 Gender in Language

a   A description of gender as it is used across a variety of languages suggests that grammatical gender does not primarily denote sex in animate beings and "analogous" features of inanimates. Rather, gender is primarily a matter of syntax. The relevant linguistic arguments are diverse; taken together, they point toward a properly linguistic notion of gender.

b   Typologically, languages may be divided into those having *noun classes* and those that lack them. The most common noun classes are the genders, which may number three (masculine, feminine, neuter) or two (masculine or feminine). Other noun-class systems distinguish animates from inanimates, or count nouns (like 'book,' 'woman,' 'tree') from mass nouns (like 'people,' 'water,' 'salt'). The languages that use gender include most of the Indo-European and Semitic

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[18] C. Brockelmann, *Grundriss der vergleichenden Grammatik der semitischen Sprachen* (Berlin: Reuter und Reichard, 1908), 1. 417.
[19] Ibrahim, *Grammatical Gender*, 21.
[20] Ibrahim, *Grammatical Gender*, 22.
[21] See especially Ibrahim, *Grammatical Gender*, 25–29.

languages; among those that do not are Turkish, Chinese, and Basque. Thus, Turkish nowhere—not even in its pronouns—grammatically distinguishes genders, whereas French, like Hebrew, presses all nouns into either the masculine or feminine genders. Noting this contrast, James Barr points out that it would be nonsensical to suppose that the Turks were unaware of sexual differences or that grammar proves the "legendary erotic interests" of the French![22] It is not true that speakers of a language with a two-gender system think of all objects as male or female; rather, as F. R. Palmer argues, "it is simply that the grammar of their language divides all nouns into two classes."[23]

c   The error of the idea that gender is attached to an object according to certain perceived qualities is further illustrated by comparing the genders of words in one language with those in another. For example, in the Romance languages 'sun' is masculine and 'moon' feminine, but in German the situation is reversed. Indeed, even for animate nouns the referential feature can be weakened or absent. Thus there are nouns in French that, though feminine in form, refer to men, for example, *la sentinelle* 'the sentinel,' *la vigi* 'the night watchman.' In French, most occupational terms are feminine, even if the person**[Page 100]** referred to by the terms is generally a male. On the other hand, some nouns designating professions are masculine (*le professeur*, *le médicin*) even when referring to a female; thus, the following sentence is possible in French: *Le professeur est enceinte*, 'The professor is pregnant.'

d   In German similar clashes of sex and gender are found. Amused that *Rübe* 'turnip' is feminine, while *Mädchen* 'girl' is neuter, Mark Twain concocted this dialogue in *A Tramp Abroad*:

> Gretchen: Wilhelm, where is the turnip?
>
> Wilhelm: She has gone to the kitchen.
>
> Gretchen: Where is the accomplished and beautiful English maiden?
>
> Wilhelm: It has gone to the opera.[24]

In truth the neuter gender of *Mädchen* is determined by the suffix -chen; the base noun is feminine, *die Magd*. Another sort of sex-gender clash arises when

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[22] James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1961) 39.

[23] F. R. Palmer, *Grammar* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971) 35.

[24] The French example is from Ibrahim, *Grammatical Gender*, 100, citing D. T. Langendoen, *The Study of Syntax* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1969) 40; the German example from *Mark Twain, A Tramp Abroad*, vol. 2, appendix D: "The Awful German Language."

adjectives indicating sex occur with nouns of the "opposite" gender. In French, 'the mouse' is *la souris*, and 'the *he*-mouse' is *la souris mâle*, that is, 'the male (feminine) mouse'!

e   It was Karl Brugmann, at the end of the last century, who most drastically revised his predecessors' views on gender. In fact he completely reversed the priority of grammatical gender and sex from that of earlier linguists. He argued that the grammatical gender, which originally had nothing to do with sex, guided the poetic imagination in mythic personifications.

In all cases that come into consideration here [the historical period of the Indo-European languages] the grammatical gender of the word, so far as we can judge, is the earlier [i.e., earlier than personifications]. The imagination used this gender and allowed itself to be led by it…When either [primitive people or poets] personified a lifeless concept into a living being, it was the grammatical form of the noun that, through the psychological impulse of analogy,…decided the definite direction of the gender—whether it should be masculine or feminine…[25]

His studies find limited confirmation in some areas. For example, the Russians personify the days of the week as male or female on the basis of the day's grammatical gender.[26] Likewise, Hebrew poets sometimes personified non-animates according to gender, for example, חָכְמָה is Lady Wisdom, hostess (Prov 9:1–6), sister (7:4), mediatrix (1:20–33). On balance, however, it is best to see grammatical gender and the natural sex of animate beings as coordinate systems, neither controlling the other.

f   A larger view of gender systems derives from the study of languages with other noun-class systems; these include the Bantu languages, some Sudanic languages, and**[Page 101]** some languages of the Caucasus and Australia. The noun classes in these languages have no simple connection to natural sex. For example, in Swahili, there are classes of animates, of small, round things, of long, thin things, and so on; each class is formally indicated by a prefix and stands in concord with its modifying adjectives and verbs. Since there is only a limited correspondence between the formal classes and their "meanings," linguists classify them merely by their accidence.[27] Gender in the Indo-European and Semitic languages appears to be a special case of noun classification; as C. F. Hockett says, "Genders are

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[25] Brugmann, *Noun Genders*, 17; cited by Ibrahim, *Grammatical Gender*, 93.
[26] Roman Jakobson, "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation," *On Translation*, ed. R. A. Brower (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1959) 232–39, at 237.
[27] E. A. Gregersen, *Prefix and Pronoun in Bantu* (International Journal of American Linguistics, Memoir 21; Bloomington: Indiana University, 1967) 1, 15–16.

classes of nouns reflected in the behavior of associated words."[28] From these comparative remarks we can see that grammatical gender does not "attribute" sex to inanimate objects and only imperfectly designates it in animate objects; it is chiefly a syntactic feature, whether the noun be animate or inanimate, not a strictly referential-semantic one.

6.3.2 Gender in Semitic and Hebrew

a   The basic facts of Hebrew gender may be reviewed before we try to discuss the workings of the system. The grammatical genders are part of the system of Hebrew accidence, that is, gender-markings show that certain parts of speech agree with other parts of speech.

b   A feminine being can be grammatically marked only in the area of animate objects (e.g., פַּר 'bull' and פָּרָה 'cow'). Lexically opposed "gender nouns" may be used to designate each member of a male-female dyed (e.g., אָב 'father' and אֵם 'mother'). Feminine plural formatives are found with nouns denoting male beings (e.g., אָבוֹת 'forebears, fathers'). On the other hand, masculine plural formatives appear with nouns denoting female beings (e.g., נָשִׁים 'women').[29]

c   There is no "reason" why inanimate nouns are in a particular grammatical gender. Contrast הַר 'hill' and גִּבְעָה 'hill.' Some inanimate nouns show two genders (e.g., דֶּרֶךְ 'way,' אֲרוֹן 'chest').[30] The same meaning may be associated with two non-animate nouns that differ only in gender (e.g., נָקָם and נְקָמָה, 'dominion, vengeance'). Non-animate feminine nouns may designate a collective (e.g., גּוֹלָה 'exile'), or a single component of a collective (e.g., אֳנִיָּה 'ship,' contrast אֳנִי 'fleet,' both masculine and feminine).

d   The feminine formative is used to form numbers used with masculine nouns (e.g., שְׁלֹשָׁה בָנִים 'three sons').

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[28] C. F. Hockett, *A Course in Modern Linguistics* (New York: Macmillan, 1958) 231. See Ibrahim, *Grammatical Gender*, 63–76, on the rationale behind the definition.

[29] The use of feminine plural forms of nouns referring to males is found more commonly in other Semitic languages than in Hebrew. The feminine-singular absolute ending in Hebrew is not uniformly *-â*; there are cases of *- t* as an absolute singular form (presumably lengthened from *-at*; see, e.g., Gen 49:22, Exod 15:2, Ps 16:6) and some cases of *-ôt* should probably be taken as singular (e.g., Judg 5:29. Ps 78:15)

[30] A survey of the use of *dérek* yields an unusual pattern: "The substantive *dere* governs either masculine or feminine agreements in independent clauses and in some dependent clauses, but only feminine agreements in relative clauses." See R. Ratner, "*Derek*: Morpho-Syntactical Considerations," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 107 (1987) 471–73, at 473.

[Page 102] e   Comparative study reveals certain patterns of gender. Hebrew (like the Semitic languages generally) conforms to these patterns. If gender primarily serves the syntactic function of concord, how did it acquire any semantic value in the Semitic languages? Did it have an "original meaning"? C. Brockelmann, because of some of the data about noun class systems presented above, thought that grammatical genders in the Semitic languages originally had nothing to do with natural sex.[31] He associated Semitic gender systems with class systems in other languages and suggested that the feminine ending, along with other minor terminations, reflects a trace of an older noun-class system in Semitic. A number of scholars have theorized that the noun classes represented by the genders were simply classes of *basic* (now masculine) and *derived* (now feminine) *forms*.

f   E. A. Speiser thought that what is now the feminine formative in Semitic began as an accusative element in the larger Semito-Hamitic or Afroasiatic language family.[32] This idea has been dismissed; the abiding value of his study of the problem remains in his contention that the "feminine" originally signified derivative words with some special modifications of the base stem. He observes that in all the Semitic languages -(a)t had not one but at least four semantic values: (1) to form an abstract from an adjective, numeral, or verb (e.g., רָעָה 'evil' from רַע 'bad'); (2) to make a collective out of a participle (e.g., אֹרְחָה 'caravan' from אֹרֵחַ 'traveler'); (3) to build a singulative (*nomen unitatis*) from a collective (e.g., שַׂעֲרָה '[a single] hair' from שֵׂעָר 'hair'); (4) to construct a diminutive or the like (e.g., יוֹנֶקֶת 'shoot' from יוֹנֵק 'young plant'; cf. 6.4.2f). The "remarkable versatility" of a formative that could mark either a collective noun or a *nomen unitatis* led Speiser to conclude:

> It is this seeming inconsistency that furnishes the necessary clue for the appreciation of the principal function of -(*a*)*t*. This was not to mark inferior classification, or to form abstracts, collectives, diminutives, or the like, but plainly to construct derivative stems with some special modification of the original meaning.[33]

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[31] C. Brockelmann, *Précis de linguistique sémitique* (Paris: Geuthner, 1910) 126: cf. n. 18 above.

[32] E. A. Speiser, "Studies in Semitic Formatives," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 56 (1936) 22–46; reprinted in J. J. Finkelstein and Moshe Greenberg, eds., *Oriental and Biblical Studies: Collected Writings of E. A. Speiser* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1967) 403–32; on the "feminine" ending see pp. 33–46, esp. pp. 37–46 (rpt. pp. 416–32, 422–32). Speiser favored the simple -*t* as the original form of the formative (p. 45 / rpt. p. 430).

[33] Speiser, "Studies in Semitic Formatives," 39 (rpt. pp. 424–25.

In time -*at* came to have the ultimate specialization of the feminine with animate objects. Other features, such as form, tradition, and associations with other words, contributed to the assignment of a noun's gender.[34]

6.4 Gender of Inanimates and Non-Animates

a   There is no "natural" gender for inanimates (objects) and non-animates (abstracts).

The earlier grammarians who sought to explain grammatical gender on such a basis were**[Page 103]** misled in their correlation of linguistic and non-linguistic phenomena. We analyze these nouns according to whether they have a Ø or -*at* formative.

6.4.1 Zero-marked Gender Nouns

a   Nouns with a Ø-gender formative may be treated in Hebrew as either masculine or feminine, though most are masculine. With few exceptions no semantically homogeneous value can be attached to the gender assignment. There are, however, three semantic fields where the gender pattern deserves study: nouns referring to body parts, place names, and figurative terms.

b   Nouns referring to *parts of the body* tend to be feminine (## 1–17).

1.	אֹ֫זֶן	ear
2.	אֶצְבַּע	finger
3.	בֶּ֫טֶן	belly
4.	בֶּ֫רֶךְ	knee
5.	זְרֹועַ	arm
6.	יָד	hand
7.	יָרֵךְ	thigh
8.	כָּנָף	wing
9.	כַּף	palm
10.	לְחִי	jaw
11.	לָשֹׁון	tongue
12.	עַ֫יִן	eye
13.	צֵלָע	side

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[34] Ibrahim, *Grammatical Gender*, 77–90. The terms "autonomous" and "non-autonomous" are sometimes used for the "masculine" and "feminine" genders.

14.	קֶרֶן	horn
15.	רֶגֶל	foot
16.	שׁוֹק	leg
17.	שֵׁן	tooth

c   A notable exception is שַׁד, (masc.) 'breast' (see Hos 9:14).

The gender of *place names* is complicated by the fact that place-name terms frequently lose their head nouns (the grammatical process of "beheading"), while the head noun continues to control the gender of the phrase. Beheading is common in English—we say 'California' for 'the state of California,' 'Mexico' for 'the United States of Mexico.' In languages with grammatical gender-systems, beheading almost invariably affects those systems. The early Arab grammarians noted that a generic term (such as 'city of…,' 'kingdom of…,' 'river of…,' 'mountain…') in construct with a place name determines the gender of the phrase and that even if the generic was not expressed, its gender still controls the term, for example, *dijlat* 'Tigris' is feminine in form but is treated as masculine, since the full expression is *nahr dijlat* 'river of Tigris' and *nahr* is masculine.[35] The omission of the noun in the construct (the beheading) is common in Arabic. Thus, most city names are feminine because *madinatu* 'city' is feminine.

d   The Hebrew situation is similar. Like Arabic *nahr*, Hebrew נָהָר is masculine, as can be seen in # 18; although פְּרָת seems to be feminine, the pronoun in # 19 is masculine, following נְהַר(־פְּרָת).

| 18. | הַנָּהָר הַגָּדֹל נְהַר־פְּרָת: | the great river, the River Euphrates |

| 19. | וְהַנָּהָר הָרְבִיעִי הוּא פְרָת: | the fourth river was the Euphrates |

[Page 104]

Again, אֲמָנָה, though feminine in form, stands in agreement with masculine modifiers because the omitted נָהָר is masculine.

| 20. | הֲלֹא טוֹב אֲמָנָה | Is not Amana better? |

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masc. masculine
[35] Ibrahim, *Grammatical Gender*, 59–60.

Another masculine head noun is בֵּית; thus בֵּית־לֶחֶם in Mic 5:1 and בֵּית־אֵל in Amos 5:5 are both masculine. Feminine heads include מַמְלֶכֶת and אֶרֶץ and either could explain the treatment of בָּבֶל as feminine in Gen 11:9 and Isa 21:9, since בָּבֶל is called both a מַמְלָכָה (Gen 10:10) and an אֶרֶץ (Jer 50:28). Similarly, אַשּׁוּר is feminine in Ezek 32:22 (cf. Isa 7:18). Note the feminines in Exod 12:33; 1 Sam 17:21; 2 Sam 8:2, 24:9. In some cases a place name seems to vary in gender; this is probably a sign that the underlying head varies. Thus יְהוּדָה is masculine in Isa 3:8, perhaps due to the head בֵּית, but feminine in Isa 7:6, due to the head אֶרֶץ. Similarly, אֱדוֹם is masculine in Num 20:20 (due to בֵּית), but feminine in Jer 49:17 (due to אֶרֶץ). In some cases the usage is not entirely clear: יְהוּדָה is probably feminine in Lam 1:3 because of עִיר rather than אֶרֶץ, or the place name there may refer by metonymy to the inhabitants of the place. Since עִיר is feminine and therefore names of cities are regarded as feminine, Israel's poets were led to personify cities as women, for example, בַּת־בָּבֶל 'Daughter Babylon' (Isa 47:1) and בַּת יְרוּשָׁלַיִם 'Daughter Jerusalem' (Isa 37:22; see 6.3.1, 9.5.3h). Concerning this method of gender assignment, Ibrahim comments: "It explains in a simple way why thousands of names of countries, rivers, cities, mountains, etc. are assigned one gender or another."[36] There are exceptions to this pattern, in which the place name determines the gender of the phrase; for example, גַּן is usually masculine, but the phrase גַּן־עֵדֶן is feminine (Gen 2:15); גֶּפֶן is probably masculine in Hos 10:1 because of the reference there to יִשְׂרָאֵל.[37]

e   A third semantic area where there is a clear pattern for Ø-marked nouns involves *figurative usage*, an area also important for feminine nouns in -*at*. Where the literal sense of a term is feminine, the figurative may be masculine: עַיִן, feminine 'eye' but masculine 'engraving surface, facet' (Zech 3:9, 4:10); שֵׁן, feminine 'tooth' but masculine 'prong (of a fork)' (1 Sam 2:13), 'point (of a rock)' (1 Sam 14:4, 5).

6.4.2 Feminine Gender-marked Nouns

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[36] Ibrahim, *Grammatical Gender*, 60.

[37] Similarly, רוּחַ is usually feminine but רוּחַ יהוה in 2 Kgs 2:16 is masculine in gender, as יהוה is. There are a few other analogous gender exceptions (גֶּפֶן as masculine in 2 Kgs 4:39; כֶּרֶם as feminine in Isa 27:2; cf. פָּנִים as feminine in Ezek 21:21). It is on the basis of these cases that Brockelmann notes that "the gender of the *regens* is sometimes determined by that of the *rectum*"; *Hebräische Syntax* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1956) 14.

a   Several important groups of non-animate and inanimate nouns are morphologically feminine. These include abstracts, collectives, and singulatives, as well as infinitives and certain figurative nouns. (On the feminine "dummy" pronoun, see 6.6d.)

b   *Abstract nouns* may be feminine singular (## 1–8) or plural (## 9–11). Singular and more often plural abstracts may be used adverbially (10.2.2e), for example, קָשׁוֹת וַיְדַבֵּר, 'he spoke harsh things (i.e., he spoke harshly)' (Gen 42:7; cf. Isa 32:4 for # 10; cf. 39.3.1).

[Page 105]		
1.	אֱמוּנָה	firmness
2.	נֶאֱמָנָה	a sure thing
3.	גְּבוּרָה	strength
4.	טוֹבָה	goodness
5.	יְשָׁרָה	uprightness
6.	נְכוֹנָה	steadfastness
7.	תְּכוּנָה	arrangement
8.	רָעָה	evil
9.	נְדִיבוֹת	noble things
10.	צָחוֹת	clear things
11.	קָשׁוֹת	harsh things

Not all abstract nouns are feminine (e.g., חַיִל 'power,' כָּבוֹד 'glory,' טוֹב וָרָע, 'good and evil' [Gen 2:9]).

c   *Collectives*, comprehensive designations of a number of things or persons, often display the -*at* suffix (## 12–14).[38] Sometimes it is uncertain whether a form is personification or a collective (## 15–16).

12.	אֹרְחָה	caravan
13.	גּוֹלָה	exile
14.	דַּלָּה	poor people
15.	אֹיֶבֶת	enemy
16.	יוֹשֶׁבֶת	inhabitant

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[38] In Greek, collective neuter plurals, like Hebrew collective feminine singulars, take a singular verb. See 6, 6c.

d   *Single components* of a collective unit often appear with *-at* suffix; such a form is called a *nomen unitatis* or singulative.

17.	אֳנִיָּה	vessel	אֳנִי	fleet
18.	צִיצָה ,נִצָּה	flower	צִיץ ,נֵץ	blossoms
19.	שַׂעֲרָה	(a) hair	שֵׂעָר	hair
20.	שִׁירָה	(a) song	שִׁיר	song, singing

On the other hand, one finds דָּגָה 'fish (coll.)' but דָּג ' (a) fish.' Some forms, for example, שׁוֹשַׁנָּה lily לְבֵנָה 'brick,' etc., are singulatives for which the collective is not attested. (The masculine שׁוּשָׁן is a metaphorical 'lily,' an architectural decoration.)

e   The *infinitive* may be treated as feminine.

21.	הַנְקַלָּה בְעֵינֵיכֶם הִתְחַתֵּן בַּמֶּלֶךְ	Do you think it a small matter to become the king's son-in-law?
	1 Sam 18:23	

In some cases it is treated as masculine.

22.	כִּי־רַע וָמָר עָזְבֵךְ...אֱלֹהָיִךְ	How evil and bitter it is that you abandoned...your God.
	Jer 2:19	

f   A *figurative sense* may also be denoted by *-at*.

23.	יוֹנֵק	suckling/child (masc.)	יוֹנֶקֶת	sucker, shoot
24.	יָרֵךְ	hip (fem.)	יַרְכָּתַיִם	sides (of a building, etc.)
25.	מֵצַח	forehead	מִצְחָה	legging, greave

[Page 106] 6.4.3 Gender Doublets

a   Some non-animate nouns have both masculine and feminine forms. Although these so-called doublets may have different connotations, it is best not to rely too heavily on their gender distinctions; both forms mean essentially the same thing. Mordechai Ben Asher has surveyed 117 non-animate nouns having both masculine and feminine forms, including five collective/nomen unitatis pairs (6.4.2d). (He excludes cases where there is no connection between similar forms, e.g., *tôrâ/tôr*, or where a connection is dubious, e.g., *ad mâ/ d m.*) Of these, 61 are abstract nouns and 56 are concrete. These pairs include all kinds of meanings:

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fem. feminine

abstract nouns (## 1–2), parts of body (## 3–4), agricultural terms (## 5–6), words connected with clothing (## 7–8); and pairs of words with initial ma-/mi- (## 9–12; see 5.6), seven of which are from medial-*waw* roots (## 11–12). He finds no positive difference in meaning between the pairs, apart from the few cases of collectives/nomina unitatis (# 6 and perhaps # 3).

1.	אָשָׁם / אַשְׁמָה	guilt
2.	נָקָם / נְקָמָה	dominion, vengeance
3.	אֵבֶר / אֶבְרָה	pinion
4.	גֵּר / גֵּרָה	back
5.	חֵלֶק / חֶלְקָה	territory
6.	צִיץ / צִיצָה	blossom
7.	אֵפוֹד / אֲפֻדָּה	ephod
8.	חֲגוֹר / חֲגוֹרָה	loin-covering
9.	מַתָּן / מַתָּנָה	gift
10.	מִמְכָּר / מִמְכֶּרֶת	ware
11.	מָגוֹר / מְגוֹרָה	terror
12.	מָחוֹל / מְחוֹלָה	dance

In five cases he found that one of the forms occurs in a poetic or elevated style, and the other mainly in an ordinary prosaic style (## 13–17).[39]

	prosaic	*elevated*	
13.	אֲפֵלָה	אֹפֶל	gloom
14.	גַּן	גַּנָּה	garden
15.	חֹשֶׁךְ	חָשְׁכָה / חֲשֵׁכָה	darkness
16.	צְדָקָה	צֶדֶק	righteousness
17.	שֹׂבַע / שָׂבָע	שָׂבְעָה / שִׂבְעָה	satiety

[39] M. Ben-Asher, "The Gender of Nouns in Biblical Hebrew," *Semitics* 6 (1978) 1–14. For differences in connotation between ṣedeq and ṣḏqâ, e.g., see J. J. Scullion, "ṣedeq-ṣedaqah in Isaiah cc. 40–66," *Ugarit- Forschungen* 3 (1971) 335–48. Related to the style contrast is the interesting material discussed by W. G. E. Watson, "Gender-Matched Synonymous Parallelism in the Old Testament," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 99 (1980) 321–41. Watson notes that in groups (usually pairs) of associated lines, nouns may be arranged by gender like with like to suggest a global picture (e.g., masc. + masc., gwym + qlwn; fem. + fem., ʾw ḥ+ ʾr , in Jer 42:12; cf. Isa 19:2). Nouns may also be paired like and unlike to suggest contrast (e.g., masc. + fem., zb + twʿbh; fem. + masc., tplh + rṣwn, in Prov 15:8) or inversion (e.g., fem. + masc., ʾrph + šknym; masc. + fem., ʾlg wqls + sbybwt, in Ps 44:14).

The doublet מַשְׁעֵן וּמַשְׁעֵנָה is used as a *hendiadys* for 'every kind of support' (Isa 3:1).

6.5 Gender of Animates

6.5.1 Natural Dyads

a Some natural male-female dyads are designated by unrelated words, neither of which is marked for gender.

[Page 107] 1.	אִישׁ	man	אִשָּׁה	woman[40]
2.	אָב	father	אֵם	mother.[41]
3.	תַּיִשׁ	he-goat	עֵז	she-goat
4.	חֲמוֹר	he-ass	אָתוֹן	she-ass
5.	אֲרִי, אַרְיֵה	he-lion	לָבִיא	she-lion

The nouns in other dyads are designated by word pairs marked Ø: -*at*.

6.	אַיָּל	hart	אַיֶּלֶת, אַיָּלָה	hind
7.	עֵגֶל	calf	עֶגְלָה	heifer
8.	עֶלֶם	young man	עַלְמָה	young woman
9.	פַּר	bull, ox	פָּרָה	cow

6.5.2 Epicene Nouns

a Nouns used for a male or female animate, or for a mixed group, are called epicene.[42] For example, in the phrase דֹּב שַׁכּוּל 'a bear robbed of her whelps' (Hos 13:8), though both noun and adjective are masculine in form, a she-bear is in view (cf. also Isa 49:15). Epicene nouns in English include 'sheep' (in contrast to 'ewe/ram'), 'secretary' (in contrast to 'male secretary/female secretary'), 'dog' (in

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[40] Despite similarities, *îš*, pl. *n̄šîm* (rarely *îšîm*), and the related word *nôš* 'humanity,' are from a root different from that of *iššâ*, pl. *n̄šîm* (*iššt* occurs once).

[41] The 'mother : father' pair is associated in many languages with an *m* : b/p/f contrast; English mama : papa, Greek *mtr* : *patr*, Latin *mater* : *pater*, English mother : father, Chinese mu : fu, etc.

[42] The term refers to 'common' gender, cf. Greek koine dialektos 'the common tongue.' The interaction of gender and names is complex. Hebrew certainly had epicene names; Gomer is a female name in Hosea, but a male name in a Samaria Ostracon; see N. Avigad, "A Hebrew Seal Depicting a Sailing Ship," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 246 (1982) 59–62, at 60.

contrast to 'bitch, female dog/male dog'). In Hebrew an epicene may be of either gender; an epicene feminine singular may form an epicene masculine plural.

	masculine				*feminine*	
1.	אֶ֫לֶף	cattle (coll.)	5.		אַרְנֶ֫בֶת	hare
2.	דֹּב	bear	6.		חֲסִידָה	stork
3.	זְאֵב	wolf	7.		יוֹנָה	dove
4.	כֶּ֫לֶב	dog	8.		נְמָלָה	ant

Sometimes grammatically masculine epicene nouns are modified according to sense with feminine forms, for example, גְּמַלִּים מֵינִיקוֹת 'nursing camels' (Gen 32:16), in contrast to גְּמַלִּים בָּאִים 'camels were approaching' (Gen 24:63). Similarly וְהַצֹּאן וְהַבָּקָר עָלוֹת 'the small cattle [i.e., sheep and goats] and the cattle which are nursing' (Gen 33:13; cf. 1 Kgs 5:3 for בָּקָר, Gen 30:39 for צֹאן). The most remarkable epicene noun is אֱלֹהִים —Hebrew (like some other Canaanite dialects) has no distinct word for 'goddess.'

[Page 108] 9.	וַיֵּ֫לֶךְ שְׁלֹמֹה אַחֲרֵי עַשְׁתֹּ֫רֶת אֱלֹהֵי צִדֹנִ֑ים	And Solomon followed Ashtoreth, the godhead of the Sidonians.

1 Kgs 11:5

6.5.3 Priority of the Masculine

a   Grammarians speak of the masculine gender as "*the prior gender*" because its form sometimes refers to female beings.

1.	זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָֽם׃	Male and female he created *them* (masc.).

Gen 1:27

2.	וַיְנַשֵּׁק לְבָנָיו וְלִבְנוֹתָיו וַיְבָ֫רֶךְ אֶתְהֶם	He kissed his sons and daughters and blessed *them* (masc.).

Gen 32:1

3.	וְאִישׁ אוֹ אִשָּׁה כִּי־יִהְיֶה בוֹ נֶ֫גַע	As for a man or a woman, when a sore be on *him*…

Lev 13:29

4.	לֹא־תַעֲשֶׂה כָל־מְלָאכָה אַתָּה	You (masc.) will do no work, neither *you* (masc.) nor your son or daughter.

coll. collective

<div dir="rtl">וּבִנְךָ־וּבִתֶּ֫ךָ</div>

This priority of the masculine gender is due in part to the intensely androcentric character of the world of the Hebrew Bible. As Clarence Vos shows, this milieu must be called a "man's world."[43] The priority of the masculine gender in these examples is due not only to the linguistic precedence of the unmarked (masculine) over the marked (feminine); it is also due in part to Israel's religion, which, though it allows or recognizes both *n bî* and *n bî â*, has place only for a priest, not a priestess, in contrast to other religions of the region.

b   The grammatical forms for God are masculine and the representations of God are mostly masculine. Although God does use a comparison to a woman in childbirth (Isa 42:14), nonetheless there is a strong scholarly consensus that God is regarded as nonsexual. "If sex must be applied to Israel's deity, it would be monosex, and this is either an incompleteness or a contradiction in terms."[44] This consensus finds explicit support in Deut 4:15–16:

> You saw no form of any kind the day Y HWH spoke to you at Horeb…so that you do not…make for yourselves an idol, an image in any shape, whether formed like a man or a woman.**[Page 109]**

One fact providing inferential support is the use of both sexes of a sacrificial victim as offerings to God. In the ancient Near East it was customary to sacrifice male animals to (male) gods and females to goddesses.[45] In Israel's cultus both males and females of a species were sacrificed to God (cf. Lev 3:1; 4:23, 28). One cannot change or remove the masculine figurative representations of God without distorting the text of the Bible.

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[43] Clarence Vos, *Woman in Old Testament Worship* (Delft: Judels en Brinkman, 1968) 32–50. The classification of animate versus inanimate may originally have enjoyed some priority, as Speiser argues from the isolated character of the *mî* 'who' : *mâ* 'what' opposition.

[44] Vos, *Woman in Old Testament Worship*, 39. Cf. also Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978); Peter T. Daniels, "Virtuous Housewife or Woman of Valor? On Sexist Language in the Hebrew Bible," *Proceedings [of the] Eastern Great Lakes and Midwest Biblical Societies* 4 (1984) 99–106; Elizabeth Achtemeier, "The Impossible Possibility: Evaluating the Feminist Approach to Bible and Theology," *Interpretation* 42 (1988) 45–57; R. M. Frye, "Language for God and Feminist Language: A Literary and Rhetorical Analysis," *Interpretation* 43 (1989) 45–57.

[45] Watson, "Gender-Matched Synonymous Parallelism," 338. Note Watson's discussion of Isa 24:21. We need to keep in mind, however, Speiser's remark, "Too much mystery seems to be made of our feminine ending" ("Studies in Semitic Formatives," 37 [rpt. p. 422]).

6.6 Concord

a   Grammatical gender involves three distinct systems: morphology, meaning with reference to an extra-linguistic reality, and syntax.[46] In Hebrew the basic morphology opposes Ø-marked masculine to the feminine in -*at*, though there are many Ø-marked nouns with female reference. In semantic terms, the -*at* suffix essentially marks derivative words, words with some special modification of the unmarked alternative, though the suffix also serves as the designation of the natural female of animates. The primary function of gender marking is to bind parts of speech together by concord in the same sentence or discourse.

b   Sometimes the grammatical form of a noun differs from its semantic significance, for example, a collective noun such as מוֹלֶ֫דֶת 'descendants' (fem.) or an abstract noun such as קֹהֶ֫לֶת 'teacher' (fem.) may have a male referent. When such clashes arise in a language, concord can follow grammatical gender (as it does, e.g., in Italian or French), or it can follow the semantic orientation of the noun; Hebrew prefers the latter course, sometimes called the *constructio ad sensum* ("construction according to the sense").[47] Thus we find הָיָה קֹהֶ֫לֶת חָכָם, 'The Teacher was wise' (Qoh 12:9). Moreover, a feminine singular collective noun may be construed with a plural verb because the noun's referent is plural; in the second example 'land' is used for 'inhabitants' by metonymy.[48]

1.	וְאָבְדוּ שְׁאֵרִית פְּלִשְׁתִּים	And the *remnant* of the Philistines *will perish*.
		Amos 1:8
2.	וְכָל־הָאָ֫רֶץ בָּ֫אוּ מִצְרַ֫יְמָה	And all the *land came* to Egypt.
		Gen 41:57
3.	וּמוֹלַדְתְּךָ אֲשֶׁר־הוֹלַ֫דְתָּ אַחֲרֵיהֶם לְךָ יִהְיוּ	And your *descendants* whom you begot after them *will be* yours.
		Gen 48:6

c   Gender agreement may also lapse when (as is often the case) the verb precedes the subject; the subject may be feminine singular or plural, and the verb may be masculine singular.[49]

[Page　　נֶעְתַּם אָ֫רֶץ　The *land is scorched*.

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[46] Ibrahim, *Grammatical Gender*, 97.
[47] Ibrahim, *Grammatical Gender*, 34.
[48] Cf. GKC §145e / p. 463.
[49] Cf. GKC §145o / p. 465.

4.

Isa 9:18

5. תַּחְתֶּ֙יךָ֙ יֻצַּ֣ע רִמָּ֔ה   Beneath you *worms* (fem., coll.) *are laid*.

Isa 14:11

6. וַיַּעֲבֹ֤ר הָרִנָּה֙   A *cry spread* through the army.
בַּֽמַּחֲנֶ֔ה

1 Kgs 22:36

7. וְחָ֖שׁ עֲתִדֹ֥ת לָֽמוֹ׃   And *doom* (lit., *prepared things*) *rushes* on them.

Deut 32:35

8. יִֽתְנַגְּפ֖וּ רַגְלֵיכֶ֑ם   Your *feet stumble*.

Jer 13:16

The preceding verb may also be a masculine plural, as in # 9; since there are cases of a masculine plural verb *following* a feminine plural noun, as in # 10, it has been suggested that both types of discord reflect an avoidance of feminine plural verbs.[50]

9. אִם־יֵצְא֛וּ בְנוֹת־שִׁילוֹ֙   If the *daughters* of Shiloh *come forth*…

Judg 21:21

10. וְעָרֵיכֶ֖ם יִהְי֥וּ חָרְבָּֽה׃   Your *cities will become* a desolation.

Lev 26:33

Examples like # 10 are far less common than cases of grammatical discord where the verb precedes the subject.

d   Finally we may mention cases in which there is no true antecedent for a pronoun—what, so to speak, is the gender of a situation or an action? Such a dummy or impersonal pronoun is usually feminine (cf. 4.4.2).

11. כִּ֣י עָשִׂ֣יתָ זֹּאת   Because you have done *this*…

Gen 3:14; cf. 3:13, 2:23

12. וּבָ֣הּ אֵדַ֔ע   By *this* I shall know.

Gen 24:14

For other examples, see Exod 10:11, Num 14:41, and Isa 43:13; cf. 1 Chr 21:10. Such a vague pronoun can be masculine, as in the stock phrase כָּזֹ֣ה וְכָזֶ֔ה 'such and such' (1 Kgs 14:5 and often) and in the following example.

13. וְזֶה־לְּךָ֣ הָא֔וֹת   And *this* will be the sign to you.

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fem. feminine
[50] Cf. GKC §145p / p. 465.